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# Researching language-focused study abroad through an equity lens: A research agenda

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**Abstract**
Study abroad (SA) has long been regarded as a key component of internationalization efforts in higher education and much scholarship has investigated the practices and outcomes of SA from varied perspectives. More recently, scholars have paid growing attention to ways to increase the participation of historically marginalized students in SA, to design SA programs to meet those students' needs, and to document their experiences abroad. Despite recent scholarship in these areas, relatively little research has employed an equity lens to address research on language-focused SA. This article puts forward language-focused SA as a possible venue to pursue equity and to provide quality education for all students, especially for historically underserved students. More specifically, we address three overarching questions: (1) What theoretical frameworks could be implemented to research SA through an equity lens?; (2) What methodological approaches could inform SA research with an equity lens?; and (3) What topics could be examined to research SA through an equity lens? Drawing on equity as a guiding principle, we discuss relevant research tasks that demonstrate specific ways to address these overarching questions in future research on language-focused SA.

## 1. Introduction

Studying abroad in a community in which a second language (L2) is widely spoken offers L2 speakers the opportunity to enhance their linguistic skills and intercultural competence, as well as to achieve other personal, academic, and career benefits. However, recent research has pointed to various ways in which access to and experiences during study abroad (SA) have been inequitable for students from marginalized groups (e.g., Anya, 2020; Glass & Gesing, 2022; Goldoni, 2017; Kommers & Bista, 2021). SOCIAL MARGINALIZATION refers to a "form of acute and persistent disadvantage rooted in underlying social inequalities" (UNESCO, 2009, p. 1) and includes people who are racially and ethnically minoritized, immigrants and children of immigrants, LGBTQ+, and those from low-income backgrounds, among others. Taking the US SA student population as an example, the majority have historically been white, female, and socioeconomically privileged (Gore, 2005; Hurst, 2019; IIE, 2020). Further, SA programs that cater to affluent white students may lead some students from marginalized groups to feel excluded (e.g., Ohito et al., 2021). For instance, one Black American student commented, "Me? Study abroad? I thought that was for rich white girls who wanted to get drunk in Paris on daddy's dime" (Lu, 2016). The cost of many SA programs and the lack of adequate financial support to students who need it can also limit participation in SA (Perkins, 2020; Salisbury et al., 2009; Simon & Ainsworth, 2012).

In addition to the question of inequitable access, research has revealed that some students from marginalized groups who do participate in SA experience discrimination and exclusion while abroad,

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both from local people and from co-national and other international students (e.g., Goldoni, 2017, 2021; Willis, 2012, 2015). Goldoni (2017), for instance, described a Black American student in Spain who faced racism from both Spaniards and white American peers. Further, the curriculum in the student's program lacked Black voices and the little representation that was included in course materials focused primarily on negative stereotypes about Black people. Ohito et al. (2021) similarly argued that lack of inclusion in the curriculum of those who have historically been "othered" is an important source of inequity for racially minoritized students in SA programs. In another example provided by Johnstone et al. (2020), a low-income, Latinx SA student from the US felt excluded by other members of her SA cohort, who were all white and more affluent. Linguistic discrimination has also been reported by SA students who speak a less prestigious or non-standard variety of a language, such as working-class and contact varieties of US Spanish (e.g., Goldoni, 2021; Quan, 2021; Riegelhaupt & Carrasco, 2000). American LGBTQ+ students abroad have similarly reported intolerance of their sexual orientation from other international students and local people, as well as classroom activities abroad that promoted heteronormativity (Brown, 2016; Willis, 2012). Beyond these examples from US-based SA students, global racial hierarchies can result in inequities for students from other countries. In one such instance, Lee et al. (2017) reported that Asian SA students in South Korea faced greater discrimination and unfair treatment compared with students from Western countries.

At the same time, an emerging literature has shed light on the ways that SA programs can be designed with marginalized students' needs in mind, which in turn may encourage participation in SA and lead to positive experiences and equitable learning outcomes for those students. For instance, students who are racially minoritized in their home country may—although not always (see e.g., Jing-Schmidt et al., 2016)—have a positive experience studying abroad in a community with a majority of people with a shared racial identity (Anya, 2017, 2021). Anya observed that Black American students who sojourned in a majority-Black city in Brazil found that being phenotypically similar to local people was a source of comfort, belonging, and joy. Anya's participants were also positively impacted by coursework that celebrated Black Brazilians and their history. SA programs that are intentionally crafted to be relevant to marginalized students and affirming of their identities, as well as those in which faculty actively promote respectful and inclusive engagement among students can also lead to an equitable and meaningful sojourn abroad (Blake et al., 2020; Johnstone et al., 2020; Lee & Green, 2016; Ohito et al., 2021). In turn, the experiences that make students feel either welcomed or excluded can have an impact on language learning opportunities and social engagement while abroad (e.g., Anya, 2021; Du, 2018; Goldoni, 2017; Kinginger & Wu, 2018; Quan, 2018).

Only a handful of existing studies have focused on language learners from marginalized groups who study abroad (e.g., Anya, 2017; Brown, 2016; Diao, 2021; Du, 2018; Quan & Menard-Warwick, 2021). Investigating the experiences of these students can enhance our understanding of language learning during SA, highlight marginalized students' unique competencies and strengths (e.g., Doerr, 2020; Hartman et al., 2020; Perkins, 2020; Quan & Menard-Warwick, 2021), and inform our efforts to make SA a positive and equitable experience for all students. More research is needed to spotlight the voices of marginalized students, as previous authors have advocated (Anya, 2020; Lee & Green, 2016; Thomas, 2013). In addition, we argue that research on language-focused SA (i.e., SA programs with an L2 component) can benefit from adopting equity as a lens. Hence, in this article, we examine how the concept of equity can be productively applied to research on language-focused SA. Specifically, we provide three overarching questions related to researching equity and, subsequently, identify a series of research tasks that can address each of those questions. The specific tasks propose example research topics and questions, as well as discuss possible research designs and methodological approaches. Considering that STUDYING abroad—by definition—involves formal education, many of the tasks that we present involve researching pedagogical components, SA program policies and practices, and learning outcomes. Finally, while many of the studies that we cite in this article are concerned with US-based SA students and institutions, we believe the ideas presented below regarding equity are applicable to SA research in other contexts as well.

## 2. Equity in education

The framework for equity that we adopt in this article is that proposed by Bensimon and colleagues (e.g., Bensimon, 2007, 2012; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Witham et al., 2015), who have argued that key to pursuing equity in education is recognizing structures and institutions that have historically excluded certain groups of people from educational opportunities. In contrast to the concept of EQUALITY, which is understood as giving everyone the same opportunities or treatment regardless of individual differences, EQUITY in the educational context involves taking individual characteristics and experiences into account to achieve the goal of producing similar outcomes for all students (Witham et al., 2015). The goal to produce similar educational OUTCOMES rather than similar OPPORTUNITIES assumes that students will come to the learning context with a myriad differences and because of these differences, focusing on giving students the same opportunities may not result in success for all students. Instead, the goal in this approach is to determine what measures can be taken to help all students thrive by taking their differences into account. As Witham et al. (2015) described, "policies and practices [that promote equity] in higher education recognize and accommodate differences in students' aspirations, life circumstances, ways of engaging in learning and participating in college, and identities as learners and students" (p. 31). In this framework, collecting and analyzing data is the first step to determine what institutional practices may lead to inequitable outcomes for marginalized students, followed by identifying and implementing changes that aim to increase success for those students (Harris & Bensimon, 2007).

Bensimon and colleagues' approach rejects viewing inequities in education as the fault of marginalized students, their families, or their communities, but rather, focuses on examining institutional policies and practices that have historically functioned to exclude those students. Although an approach focused on equity can include all those who have historically been marginalized, Bensimon and colleagues suggested that equity initiatives in US higher education have not always clearly addressed inequities based on students' race (Bensimon et al., 2016; Malcolm-Piqueux & Bensimon, 2017). In these authors' view, race has commonly been conflated with socioeconomic status in discussions of equity in the US context, an approach that fails to account for disparities among low-income white students, on the one hand, and low-income Black, Indigenous, Latinx, or Asian students, on the other.

Although putting in place policies and structures that promote equity can be for the benefit of students from all marginalized groups, Bensimon and colleagues emphasize race in their proposal for equity-mindedness owing to lack of critical engagement by educational institutions specifically with race-based inequities (Bensimon et al., 2016; Malcolm-Piqueux & Bensimon, 2017). Hence, their approach to equity is affirmatively race conscious, meaning that outcomes by students from specific racial groups should be examined and inequities be identified and addressed. They further argued that to eliminate inequities, institutional culture, structures, and policies need to be interrogated. Gathering evidence about how existing practices may create inequities plays a crucial role: "data can help practitioners to truly understand the nature of problematic inequities in outcomes" (Malcolm-Piqueux & Bensimon, 2017, p. 7). Finally, once the factors that contribute to inequities are understood, practitioners should feel empowered to take action to remedy the identified gaps in equity. These principles of equity-mindedness inform the following discussion about how language-focused SA can be researched through an equity lens.

## 3. Researching equity in language-focused SA

In this section, we address three overarching questions that focus on equity as a guiding principle for research on language-focused SA, with a series of tasks that future research could implement:

1. What theoretical frameworks could be employed in SA research with an equity lens?
2. What methodological approaches could inform SA research with an equity lens?
3. What topics could be examined in SA research with an equity lens?

### 3.1 Theoretical frameworks for researching SA with an equity lens

While a diversity of theories have been adopted to make sense of the multi-faceted practices of SA, a great deal of attention has been placed on gains in L2 skills and intercultural competence, without always problematizing the status quo in SA contexts. Given the nature of equity-mindedness, we chose to discuss critical approaches to SA research, which interrogate the status quo: critical global citizenship, critical language awareness, and raciolinguistics. Each of these frameworks offers a different approach to equity. While we are not the first to suggest that these frameworks be employed in SA research, we hope to advance the conversation by considering specific ways in which these conceptual lenses can be employed in pursuit of equity in research on language-focused SA.

### 3.1.1 Critical global citizenship

In the context of internationalization initiatives in higher education, preparing students to be global citizens is commonly presented as a goal and SA as one of the avenues for achieving this goal (Aktas et al., 2016; Larsen, 2014). There is no single definition of global citizenship; some conceptualizations foreground a neoliberal project, prioritizing the need to prepare students to succeed in the global economy (Bosio, 2021), while other approaches reinforce neo-colonial power relations—for instance, encouraging privileged students from the Global North to volunteer in the Global South and "save the world" (Andreotti, 2006; Mikander, 2016; Villarreal Sosa & Lesniewski, 2020). Discourses such as the latter position host countries as deficient and in need of students' assistance (Larsen, 2016), without considering whether students have the knowledge and skills to actually contribute positively to the host community. Arising from a critique of these notions of what it means to be a global citizen is the framework of critical global citizenship (Andreotti, 2006; Fiedler, 2007; Hartman et al., 2018). Hartman et al. (2018, p. 27) defined critical global citizenship in the following way:

> A commitment to fundamental human dignity, couched in a critically reflective understanding of historic and contemporary systems of oppression, along with acknowledgment of positionality within those systems; it connects with values, reflection, and action. A critical global citizenship calls us all to humble, careful, and continuous effort to build a world that better acknowledges every individual's basic human dignity.

The critical global citizenship framework centers equity: it involves an examination of unequal power relations and the role of privileged people and nations in creating, reproducing, and benefitting from those unjust systems, along with an emphasis on the need to critically reflect on difference, recognize responsibility toward others, and act in an informed and ethical manner to collaboratively address injustices (e.g., Andreotti, 2006). Whereas a traditional global citizenship approach might describe countries in the Global South as being "poor," "helpless," or "lacking in development," a critical global citizenship approach would emphasize the inequities, injustices, and exploitation that those countries face (Pashby & Andreotti, 2015). Pashby and Andreotti further suggested that the goal in traditional global citizenship approaches may be "so that everyone achieves development, harmony, tolerance, and equality," while a critical approach has as a desired outcome "that injustices are addressed, more equal grounds for dialogue are created, and people can have more autonomy to define their own development" (p. 16). Critical global citizenship is distinguished from early concepts of intercultural competence (e.g., Bennett, 1993; Byram, 2012) in providing a greater focus on issues related to equity. More recent approaches to intercultural competence education have advocated incorporating a critical dimension, highlighting a political and social justice orientation that resonates with critical global citizenship (Dasli & Díaz, 2017).

   Although research has considered the ways in which SA has the potential to promote critical global citizenship (e.g., Hartman et al., 2020; Larsen, 2014), previous work explicitly employing the critical global citizenship framework in education abroad has not tended to focus on the role of language as it intersects with power and identity in the SA context (Eidoo et al., 2011). However, we propose

that this theoretical framework can be fruitfully applied to research that investigates language in SA through an equity lens and, more specifically, the service learning abroad setting.

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**Research task 1**

Examine to what extent a pedagogical intervention in language-focused international service learning experiences leads to students' development of critical global citizenship, with a focus on systems of power as they relate to languages and language speakers.

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**Exemplar:** One type of SA program that is commonly associated with developing one's skills as a global citizen as well as an L2 speaker is international service learning—that is, community involvement abroad combined with academic study (Gaugler & Matheus, 2019). Research on service learning abroad and its potential to promote L2 learning has grown in recent years. As described by Marijuan and Sanz (2018), a service-learning experience can enhance students' confidence in their L2 skills, expand their social networks with L2 speakers, and provide considerable exposure to the L2. Service-learning experiences are also an opportunity for SA students to develop their skills as critical global citizens. Given that the service learning model typically includes academic study in tandem with work in the community, whether in at-home settings or abroad (see Palpacuer Lee et al., 2018; Porto, 2019, for service learning for pre-service language teachers' criticality and intercultural citizenship), one direction future research could take is to examine the outcomes of a pedagogical intervention in SA to promote critical global citizenship with a focus on language.

We provide an example of an intervention in the context of service learning that could be carried out with intermediate- to advanced-proficiency US students learning Spanish in Latin America. That intervention could encourage students to critically reflect on power relations as they relate to languages and language speakers. For instance, students might explore the reasons why people from Latin America migrate to the US, contributing to Spanish being the second most widely spoken language in their home country. Instructors might point out that much immigration from Latin America is owing to economic reasons and ask students to consider the root causes of poverty, as well as the political and historical context of colonialism and imperialism.

Another dimension that students could explore in this example pedagogical intervention is Bourdieu's (1993) notion of "legitimate speakers" of "legitimate languages." White students, in particular, could contrast their experiences speaking Spanish at home and abroad after becoming aware that the use of Spanish by Black and brown Spanish-speaking immigrants in the US is regularly disparaged and linked to their marginalization (e.g., Davis & Moore, 2014; Flores & Rosa, 2015; Rosa, 2016). White people, in contrast, are regularly celebrated for their bilingualism, whereas bilinguals of other races are viewed as deficient and in need of remediation (Flores & Rosa, 2019). Finally, students can be asked to consider actions that they can take when they are back at home related to their reflections on language and power while abroad, such as supporting the human rights of Spanish-speaking immigrants in the US and speaking out against linguistic discrimination, xenophobia, and racism against that group. Key to ethical action in the critical global citizenship framework, however, is collaboration with others and reciprocal relationships while being aware of power inequities (e.g., Palpacuer Lee et al., 2018). Hence, students can be encouraged to follow the lead of US-based Spanish-speaking immigrant groups as they consider what actions to take back home, so as not to re-enact social hierarchies.

After designing and implementing a pedagogical intervention to encourage the development of critical global citizenship, future research can examine learning outcomes. One approach is exemplified by Larsen (2014), who used case studies to investigate the impact of international service learning on the development of critical global citizenship. Larsen proposed a framework for analyzing critical global citizenship which included various dimensions related both to awareness and analysis (e.g., "awareness of difference," "self-awareness," "global awareness") and action and engagement (e.g., "civic action," "social justice action"). The author employed surveys, interviews, and student blogs to examine these dimensions and found that service learning alone—without explicit critical global

citizenship education—did not often lead to critically engaged global citizens. In addition, another possible learning outcome that can be measured is whether the intervention positively impacts the experiences of racially and ethnically minoritized students in the group receiving the instruction. Given that white American students have been observed in previous research to discriminate against peers from other races (e.g., Goldoni, 2017), instruction about racial discrimination as it relates to language may have the outcome of raising awareness and changing such behavior among white students, potentially leading to a more equitable experience for minoritized students. The latter goal could be assessed in various ways, such as through interviews or focus groups with marginalized SA student participants (e.g., Johnstone et al., 2020).

In sum, incorporating critical global citizenship education with a focus on language into international service-learning experiences and researching the outcomes of a pedagogical intervention of this type can expand our understanding of the ways that education abroad that incorporates an equity lens can guide L2 learners not only in acquiring L2 skills, but also in developing critical reflection and engagement with regard to the connection between language and power.

### 3.1.2 Critical language awareness

Another theoretical framework that could be applied to SA research with a focus on equity is critical language awareness. This framework has been employed to understand inequities as manifested in language learning and use (Abe & Shapiro, 2021; Alim, 2005, 2010; Leeman, 2018). Derived from Fairclough's (2003) seminal work on the role of language in sustaining societal inequality in schools and workplaces, critical language awareness interrogates assumptions and biases often targeted at non-standard and less prestigious language varieties and their speakers. Distinct from language awareness—largely focused on noticing of intra-linguistic variations to promote language acquisition (Svalberg, 2012)—critical language awareness has been applied to engage students in analyzing language forms, functions, and usage, by drawing their attention to how and why linguistic prejudice is prevalent and intertwined with socio-historical hierarchies and power asymmetries among languages and language speakers.

Critical language awareness has been applied to underlying pedagogies for heritage language education (Leeman, 2018; Leeman & Serafini, 2021; Loza & Beaudrie, 2021), undergraduate general education (Abe & Shapiro, 2021), and teacher development (Alim, 2005, 2010; Paris & Alim, 2014). Leeman (2018) and Leeman and Serafini (2021), for instance, applied critical language awareness to the teaching of Spanish as a heritage language for US Latinx students. In their proposal, they emphasized the significance of drawing students' attention to different dialects and varieties of Spanish to encourage student agency in making linguistic decisions as they use language to enact and negotiate identities and stances.

In another example, Abe and Shapiro (2021) proposed the inclusion of sociolinguistically-informed empathy and writing reflection on self and other in L2 Japanese and English composition courses as part of General Education (i.e., courses that help students develop foundational skills for undergraduate study) for US students. Considering critical language awareness as a component of global citizenship (in turn, a learning goal of General Education), they delineated a learning sequence composed of analyzing linguistic assumptions and biases towards languages or linguistic forms (descriptivism), making associations between socio-cultural meanings with linguistic forms (indexicality), and examining ideologies undergirding linguistic assumptions and associations (language ideology). In view of the promise of critical language awareness as a valuable component of language pedagogy, we propose that it be incorporated into research on equity in language-focused SA by examining and assessing the outcomes of critical language awareness-centered SA curricula.

**Research task 2**

Apply the key tenets of critical language awareness (i.e., critical pedagogical approaches to promote student understanding of power asymmetry and inequity manifested in language and its acquisition and use) to language-focused SA curricula and activities.

**Exemplar:** Critical language awareness could serve as a framework for SA research through an equity lens. Drawing on critical multilingual awareness, Lindahl et al. (2020), for instance, reported how three different SA programs for US teachers could help raise participants' critical awareness of how language is used to reflect, sustain, and reinforce power structures and historical oppression of speakers of minoritized languages in different host countries. Despite the variation in participants' backgrounds (e.g., Spanish-English bilingual teachers and L2 English teachers) and the goals (language study, coursework on multiculturalism, teaching in local schools), and duration of programs (e.g., five days to five weeks), the distinct programs converged on raising critical awareness of local language practices in relation to sociopolitical contexts, as measured through pre-, mid-, and post-trip surveys.

Although the SA programs reported in Lindahl et al. (2020) were aimed at teachers, their study suggested the possibility of infusing critical language awareness into SA activities for a broader student population, including students from marginalized backgrounds. Similarly, studies by Abe and Shapiro (2021) and Leeman (2018) indicate the potential benefit of incorporating critical language awareness into SA, with a language-learners-as-ethnographers approach to analyzing data to better understand how language indexes different meanings. Future research could implement instruction in SA based on critical language awareness that assists students in making connections between micro-level language use patterns and macro-level socio-historical phenomena and in questioning existing biases and power asymmetries manifested in intra- and cross-linguistic variation. SA instruction could offer authentic opportunities for students to examine how language reinforces existing biases and indexes power structures. As Lindahl et al. (2020) recommended, reflection prompts are explicit ways of drawing student attention to social inequities surrounding language use and learning. In carrying out guided reflection, learners could also draw on different modalities, including video and photos using their mobile devices, which could then allow researchers to examine the learning outcomes of an instructional intervention based on critical language awareness. More specifically, a potential learning outcome related to equity for marginalized students could include gaining awareness of the specific meanings that L2 forms index in their sociohistorical context and claiming the agency to make linguistic choices among those forms that allow the expression of their desired identities and stances.

### 3.1.3 Raciolinguistics

A third framework that could be applied to research pursuing equity in language-focused SA is raciolinguistics, which focuses on examining connections between language, race, and power (Alim et al., 2016). Scholars in this area have investigated, among other things, the discursive construction of identities by racialized speakers, the stances they take in social interaction toward race, being racialized, and racial justice, the ways in which racialized speakers resist racism, and the ideologies held by the dominant social group about language use by racialized people. Regarding the latter, Flores and Rosa (2015, 2019) grounded contemporary raciolinguistic ideologies in the US and across the globe in the historical context of colonialism, in which Europeans and European-descent people distinguished Europeanness (whiteness) from non-Europeanness (nonwhiteness), positioned the former as superior, and racialized the latter—that is, ascribed non-European people a racial identity for the purposes of social exclusion and exploitation. As Flores and Rosa (2019) argued, "While [colonial] ideologies have been reconfigured throughout the centuries, the underlying framing has remained the same— there is something inherently deficient about the language practices of racialized communities that make them inferior to the unmarked white norm" (p. 147). The outcome for racialized people is that they "are perpetually perceived as linguistically deficient even when engaging in language practices that would likely be legitimized or even prized were they produced by white speaking subjects" (Rosa & Flores, 2017, p. 628).

Given that these raciolinguistic ideologies are entrenched in mainstream institutions, including education systems, they will necessarily impact the circumstances in which racialized people learn another language in both uninstructed and instructed settings (Flores & Rosa, 2019). Spotlighting the experiences of racialized SA students can shed light on the ways those students negotiate their

identities during their sojourn abroad and how members of the host country position and perceive racialized students. Both aspects may influence the opportunities for and the nature of social interaction abroad that, in turn, can affect students' experiences and learning outcomes abroad. Work in this area will enrich our understanding of language-focused SA by including the experiences of students from different backgrounds in the research database and, further, can inform efforts to make SA policies and practices more equitable.

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**Research task 3**

**Investigate the ways in which racialized SA students employ linguistic resources to construct racial identities in social interaction and how they are positioned by their interlocutors.**

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**Exemplar:** A robust literature on identity and social interaction in SA has revealed various ways in which SA students' and host country interlocutors' identities and positioning of each other influences language use, social networks, and interpersonal relationships (e.g., Shively, 2018). Relatively little research has focused on the role of racial identities or intersections among gender, class, sexuality, and race in language-focused SA; however, several existing studies provide examples of different approaches to exploring this area. Interviews with racialized students and audio-recordings of interactions involving those students have provided insights into why they may withdraw from social interaction owing to discrimination based on race and social class. In Riegelhaupt and Carrasco's (2000) study, for instance, a US Chicana student sojourning in Mexico experienced race- and class-based discrimination from her host family. While the Chicana student committed fewer errors and possessed greater fluency in Spanish than her white American roommate, the latter's Spanish was accepted by the host family while the former's was routinely criticized and positioned as uneducated owing to the use of a handful of stigmatized lexical items. This positioning by the host family led the Chicana student to lose confidence in her Spanish and feel uncomfortable and unwelcome in her homestay. An intervention by program administrators to raise host families' awareness of sociolinguistic variation, which had the intention of mitigating linguistic discrimination, was described by the authors as having positive outcomes.

Previous research also reveals ways in which policies and practices in SA can promote positive outcomes for racialized students and how racialized students themselves position themselves regarding race to create the SA experiences they desire. Anya's (2017, 2021) research on Black Americans studying abroad in Brazil highlights the importance of the curriculum in shaping racialized students' experience. In the program examined, Afro-Brazilian culture and history were highlighted in the curriculum and Black Brazilians were presented not as stereotypes—as is often the case (Anya, 2021)—but rather, as "primary and powerful actors fundamental to the creation, beauty, and resilience of the nation" (p. 56). For one student, Leti, this focus affirmed her Blackness and gave her pride in her racial identity which, in turn, motivated her to learn more Portuguese and increase her engagement with Brazilians. In another study that considered the experiences of a Black American sojourning in China (Diao, 2021), the student viewed interest by local people in his physical appearance as positive and used that interest as an opportunity to speak Mandarin and make friends. In sum, these example studies spotlight issues that contribute to both research and practice in language-based SA. In terms of research, such studies enrich our understanding of social interaction in SA and the role of student identities in the nature of that interaction and motivations for engagement or disengagement. With regard to policies and practices, these studies underscore the importance of offering programs in a variety of locations across the globe, including historically excluded groups in the curriculum in a non-stereotyped way, and being careful in the selection of host families to include families of different races as well as those who will not perpetuate discrimination against students. Further research is needed to continue to explore this under researched area of language-focused SA. Scholars who work with racialized SA students who are willing to participate in research are encouraged to collect discourse and ethnographic data with those students to better understand their experiences in social interaction

during SA, which can contribute to SA research on the topic as well as inform the design of more equitable SA programs.

## 3.2. Methodological approaches to researching SA through an equity lens

Having highlighted three theoretical frameworks that could be applied to SA research with an equity lens, we turn now to four methodological issues that have potential to help address equity in SA: assessment in SA, sending institutions, ecological validity, and learner-centered methods. These methodological issues surrounding the what and the how of scholarly inquiry are identified to further research at the intersection of equity and SA.

### 3.2.1 Assessment methods in language-focused SA aligned with the goals of sojourners from marginalized backgrounds

Much research has documented the effects of SA on L2 gains (or lack thereof) and learner- and program-related factors, including identity, motivation, length of residence, and social networks (see Isabelli-García et al., 2018, for a review). The wealth of knowledge about the benefits of a SA experience relies largely on the research design of pre- and post-testing (e.g., Watson & Wolfel, 2015). Studies in this area tend to focus on linguistic features or domains that are measurable and that have identifiable boundaries, such as linguistic accuracy and precision (Leonard & Shea, 2017), lexis (Briggs, 2015), oral fluency (Mora & Valls-Ferrer, 2012), and pronunciation (Nagle et al., 2016).

Despite the insights gained from this line of research, relatively little is known about assessing language-focused SA practices and learning outcomes in relation to the goals and standards that sojourners and other stakeholders (e.g., sending and host institutions) set out to achieve. A need for assessment and accountability arises in response to the increasing popularity of SA programs. In particular, there is a growing call for developing and implementing tools and systems to ensure and sustain the quality of SA programs aligned with varied stakeholders' goals (see Kang & Pacheco, 2021). In addressing this call, it is important to incorporate the goals of participants from marginalized backgrounds into tools and systems for SA assessment and quality assurance, drawing on the principles of equity-mindedness.

**Research task 4**

Examine what practices and procedures could be used to monitor and ensure the quality of a SA experience aligned with the goals of sojourners from historically marginalized backgrounds and other stakeholders (e.g., sending and host institutions).

**Exemplar:** As noted above, there is a scholarly and programmatic need to turn attention to assessment of sojourners' learning, practice, and transformation aligned with the programmatic and individual goals of SA. In doing so, we recommend eliciting and collecting data from multiple sources at multiple times before, during, and after SA. As an example of such an approach, Dressler et al. (2021) reported on a SA program for Canadian pre-service teachers through which they lived and taught abroad for nine weeks in the final year of their degree program. Included in the program were preparation workshops, group activities, and writing during residence abroad, and debriefing activities upon return. Opportunities for reflective writing were built in throughout the program to keep track of participants' learning about language learning and teaching through blogging. While abroad, sojourners used blogging on a social networking site, Ning.com, which allowed the participants to comment on each other's posts and the audience (e.g., friends, family, or future participants) to view blog posts by year, host country, or author. Students were instructed to write one post every two weeks in response to guiding prompts. Tracking multiple reflection posts over time in their study made it possible to obtain insights into the quality and scope of sojourners' practice and learning in relation to the goals of the teacher education program and the individual participants.

While narrative in blogging is a powerful form of reflection on immersive experiences during SA (Barkhuizen, 2017), future research could also employ multimodalities and digital tasks (e.g., pictures, videos, and content posted to other social media platforms) as a way to gather and analyze data about the efficacy of SA experiences in relation to programmatic and sojourner goals (e.g., Lomicka & Ducate, 2021, for the use of multimodal composition focused on street signs in the host country in regards to sojourner development of intercultural competence). When making decisions about learning outcomes, researchers would do well to consider individual differences—that is, that sojourners participating in the same program from the same sending university may experience a particular aspect of SA differently. To address this, it is essential to draw on multiple sources and perspectives from various stakeholders, including instruction staff, host families, and co-sojourners in a host institution/country, as well as the sending institution, in a systematized way. Comparing and cross-checking information about L2 use and learning outcomes from different sources at different points in time could be a way to help ensure equity for all participants, including those from marginalized backgrounds, in assessment of learning outcomes in SA. Such sources for data include digital reflection tasks using mobile devices that learners would use anyway while sojourning, as documented in previous research (e.g., Dressler et al., 2021). Analyzing such multimodal data in relation to programmatic and sojourner goals, incorporating different stakeholders' input, as well as learners', could serve the purposes of learning assessment and program evaluation. Use of such alternative methods could help promote the pursuit of equity by minimizing biases often associated with the singular standardized way of testing and instead incorporating multiple perspectives to understanding the lived experience of marginalized students in relation to SA.

### 3.2.2 Broadening sending institutions researched to include minority-serving institutions

While some research has examined marginalized students' SA experiences, as described above (e.g., Anya, 2017; Brown, 2016; Diao, 2021; Quan, 2018; Quan & Menard-Warwick, 2021), recent studies on language-focused SA have largely not focused on the types of sending institutions. In the US higher education system, some universities are categorized as minority-serving institutions, based on the percentage of undergraduate students who identify as Black, Indigenous, or Latinx: Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), and Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), respectively. Community (two-year) colleges also serve many racially and ethnically minoritized and low-income students. These institutions also enroll a greater proportion of financially-insecure students: more than a half of students enrolled at minority-serving institutions receive need-based financial support, compared with only 31% of all US-based university students (Conrad & Gasman, 2015). Scholarship on language-focused SA has rarely addressed SA programs and participants from these minority-serving institutions. Further, most of the participants in previous SA research were undergraduate students enrolled in four-year institutions, often research-intensive universities or liberal arts colleges with which scholars are affiliated.

Compared with an 11% rate of SA participation for US undergraduates nationwide, only approximately 3% of students at HBCUs and only 2% of community college students choose to study abroad (IIE, 2020). Considering the gap between four-year institutions in general and minority-serving institutions in the rate of SA participation, as well as the fact that community college students represent a racially, socially, and economically diverse population (Whatley, 2021), it is essential to examine the needs and experiences of students at these less represented institutions. It is equally important to uncover how students' individual goals and beliefs intersect with institutional policies and practices in SA programs.

**Research task 5**

Examine SA-related needs and goals for marginalized students, especially those at minority-serving institutions (e.g., HBCUs, TCUs, HSIs) and community colleges in relation to institutional policies and practices.

**Exemplar:** While previous research has advocated inclusion and equity in SA in terms of individual-level characteristics (e.g., race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation), relatively little information is available as to the nexus of SA and institution-level characteristics. Contrary to the gap in the applied linguistics literature, the higher education literature more generally has paid increasing attention to the junction of SA and students from minority-serving institutions, such as community college students (e.g., Amani & Kim, 2018; Whatley, 2021). However, the higher education literature on SA for community college students has rarely focused on language or L2 learning per se, even when L2 learning and intercultural competence development are desired outcomes of SA. Amani and Kim's (2018) interview study, for instance, examined US community college students' reasons for choosing to study abroad and the challenges they faced as they made their decisions. Their results indicated that both traditional and non-traditional community college students viewed SA positively as an opportunity to increase their academic transfer prospects, intercultural competence, and L2 proficiency, and that to achieve these personal-level factors, there was a need for faculty encouragement and parental and peer group support. Similar to the challenges encountered by marginalized participants from four-year institutions (Thomas, 2013), the community college students in Amani and Kim (2018) also noted concerns about funding, fear of travel, and anxiety about academic-life balance as barriers that they had to overcome to participate in SA.

Considering the relative absence of research on language-focused SA in relation to institutional policy and practice, we suggest future research focus on SA for students from minority-serving institutions. Higher education scholars like Whatley (2021) have already called for a need to treat SA for community college students as an independent area of inquiry, rather than merely applying the research paradigms and findings on SA from four-year institutions to community college SA programs. It is important for researchers and practitioners alike to understand how students from minority-serving institutions and community colleges navigate institutional policy and practice of their home institution while experiencing the L2 and culture in a host institution/country. In addition to considering L2 acquisition, future research could take a holistic approach that includes how students from minority-serving institutions make decisions to participate in language-focused SA and negotiate home institutional policy and practice, as well as consider the role of support and mentoring. It will also be of interest to examine how students from low-income backgrounds navigate the intersection of L2 learning and social class or racial/ethnic identity during SA in the host country. To this end, researchers (who are often affiliated with research-intensive universities) could seek out opportunities to collaborate with faculty and administrators from minority-serving institutions and community colleges to pursue research on language-focused SA programs for students at such sending institutions as a new area of research. Doing so can help inform how SA programs and policies can best support students from those institutions that are currently underrepresented in the literature in achieving equitable participation in and outcomes from studying abroad.

### 3.2.3 Ecological validity in the integration of the SA curriculum with research activities

In the existing literature, various research methods have been employed to understand SA as a research construct and pedagogical practice. In line with the "social turn" (Ortega, 2011) to view L2 learning not just as the acquisition of grammar, but also as "social practices, values and indexicality" (p. 172), SA research has increasingly considered an array of issues, such as communicative competence (Gong et al, 2021), learner identity (Goldoni, 2017; Kinginger, 2013), and language ideologies (Brown, 2021; De Costa, 2011; Kang & Pacheco, 2020), among others. The emergent diversity in topics and focal constructs is accompanied by various research designs, methods, participants, and combinations of native/target languages and sending/host countries.

Among recent developments related to diversity in SA research trends is the use of programmatic activities and tasks for research purposes in faculty/researcher-led SA programs. In a growing number of studies, researchers, also serving as SA program coordinators and/or instructors, develop and implement activities and tasks for both research and pedagogical purposes, such as blogging (Dressler et al., 2021), reflective journaling (Gong et al., 2021; Lee, 2011), web-based multimodal posting (Lomicka &

Ducate, 2021), and small-group discussions (i.e., focus group interviews) (Amuzie & Winke, 2009; Gong et al., 2021). The integration of the SA curriculum with research activities could help enhance the ecological validity of research findings (Gehrke, 2018), defined as "the degree of correspondence between the research conditions and the phenomenon being studied" (p. 2) as it manifests in real-world settings. This trend, which is increasingly prevalent in SA research, could help provide insight into the complex and evolving nature of sojourning through an equity lens, as long as the researcher's reflexivity and consideration of ethical issues are adequately addressed.

**Research task 6**

Incorporate scholarly teachers' insights into research methods to better understand the SA experiences of students from marginalized backgrounds in relation to SA activities and programmatic goals.

**Exemplar:** It is perhaps not surprising to see publications authored by researchers who led SA programs utilizing curricular activities for research purposes. Researchers with firsthand knowledge about what constitutes SA practice make it possible to employ ecologically valid methods through an equity lens, recognizing asymmetries in resources between sending and host countries and institutions, as well as among participants in the same program.

An example of SA researchers/teachers using ecologically valid methods in SA research comes from Lomicka and Ducate (2021), who showed how a linguistic landscape task (focused on the language of public signs, such as billboards, place names, and street signs) through the mobile application Padlet helped promote noticing of new cultural and linguistic surroundings for two groups of American undergraduates visiting Germany and France, as part of short-term language-focused SA programs. It was reported that the two authors were the course instructors and that their students were provided with pre-departure and in-country instruction on the concept of linguistic landscapes and the use of Padlet. The students in Lomicka and Ducate (2021) were instructed to take pictures of their surroundings in the host country and to reflect on what those images meant to them when they shared their pictures in Padlet. The guided multimodal reflection task on linguistic landscapes helped facilitate the students' intentional noticing of their surroundings and awareness of cultural aspects between their home and host countries. The integration of technology also afforded a space in which students could share their reflections and collaborate with co-nationals. The use of a linguistic landscape task mediated through Padlet, which students were trained to use before departure and throughout the program, likely helped strengthen the ecological validity of the findings in that shared pictures and comments through Padlet were reflective of SA participants' behaviors during the sojourn.

This work by Lomicka and Ducate (2021) underscores the notion that SA can be considered an ecology where the long-standing gap between research and practice in the real world related to equity issues can be closed by insights from scholarly teachers and practitioners. Research/curricular activities during SA are ideally led by scholars with intimate knowledge about the setting and ecology, as well as the linguistic and cultural needs of students from diverse backgrounds. It is equally essential to encourage faculty practitioners from diverse backgrounds and life experiences to develop SA programs for research and pedagogical purposes. Future research that entails scholarly practitioners' insights, reflexivities, and sustained relationships with varied stakeholders, including participants from marginalized backgrounds, can help offer a nuanced understanding of SA through an equity lens. A faculty scholar who leads a diverse group of learners to study abroad, for instance, could assign students reflection entries throughout the program as part of a course, and examine whether there are any inequities among students from different backgrounds in meeting individual students' and the program's goals regarding L2 learning. Findings from such research/programs could subsequently be meaningful and applicable to other SA research/programs that aspire to address equity issues.

### 3.2.4 Methods centered on diverse learners' voices in relation to resources afforded by SA

As discussed above, recent scholarship has touched upon the underrepresentation of marginalized students in SA and the experiences of these students when they do go abroad. Scholars have further drawn attention to the multifaceted nature of SA participation and experiences in relation to sociohistorical circumstances. For instance, Thomas (2013) highlighted the fact that race and ethnicity are often intertwined with other variables, such as class, sending institution, and gender. Pointing out the personal barriers and institutional obstacles documented in the literature as the consequence of a deficit view, Thomas (2013) further accentuated the importance of identifying and addressing the needs and challenges experienced by underrepresented groups of students in making decisions to travel abroad. Similarly, Anya (2020) proposed development of program-level plans and policies regarding ways to address racism-related experiences among a cohort of co-nationals and to promote safe spaces for racialized experiences to be critically discussed as a curricular activity.

SA research has increasingly turned attention to how an international sojourn can shift what learners believe about language and intercultural learning, in relation to their lived experiences and agency (see Isabelli-García et al., 2018; Marijuan & Sanz, 2018). The goal of such research has been to "listen to participants and build an understanding based on what is heard" (Creswell, 2013, p. 29) and to incorporate participants' views into research and practice. Indeed, a promising area of inquiry is examining how sojourners from diverse backgrounds navigate SA opportunities and negotiate their evolving identities and ideologies, in relation to different symbolic and material resources afforded by SA.

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**Research task 7**

Employ methods that foreground the voices of SA students from marginalized groups to better understand their multilayered experiences abroad.

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**Exemplar:** Much research in SA has prioritized L2-only immersion environments and L2 gains. Recent research in a different vein, however, has turned attention to alternative views on SA in terms of participants and research focus, examining participants from diverse backgrounds choosing to travel to destinations less covered in the previous literature, which, in turn, has led to varied research questions and methods. Using a case-study methodology, Quan and Menard-Warwick (2021), for instance, provided an in-depth, multi-layered analysis of a Vietnamese American university student who spent 16 weeks in Guatemala. The study offered a glimpse into how SA facilitated a sojourner's awareness of her own multilingual and multicultural resources from her upbringing in a working-class immigrant household. Adopting a translingual framework (Canagarajah, 2013), the study shed light onto this focal sojourner's competence to engage in meaning-making practices using Vietnamese (her heritage language), African-American Vernacular English (the English variety she was exposed to growing up), Standard English (the medium of formal schooling), and Spanish (her L2) during SA.

Of further note is that Quan and Menard-Warwick's (2021) use of journal entries, blogs, and interviews not just as research instruments, but also as part of SA activities, accompanied by the researchers' classroom observations, made it possible to unravel the dynamic intersections of the learner's language practices and SA as a context. For instance, the learner leveraged L2 Spanish interaction with her instructor to mediate her prior experiences with translingual practices in contact zones where different languages and ways to communicate meanings juxtaposed in her family and community back in the US. The research methods in their study foregrounded the student's voice and helped reveal how SA promoted awareness of her multilingual resources as an asset, which, in turn, enriched her SA experience.

As shown in this example, it is essential to employ methods that include the voices of participants with varied life experiences and goals for SA, with ecologically valid and relevant tools for increasingly diverse SA participants and practices. In addition to promoting the acquisition of the L2 and culture during SA, it is crucial to use research materials that empower and give voice to students from

marginalized backgrounds in connection with sojourning experiences. Future research could examine, for example, how different SA activities infused with a critical language awareness approach empower and give voice to learners with different identities, especially those with multilingual identities from marginalized backgrounds in terms of race, class, and gender. It is equally vital to consider how to elicit and interpret such participants' voices beyond traditional research tools, by using authentic instruments conducive to understanding varied life experiences, including social media postings and reflective journaling in relation to SA. Doing so will offer a richer understanding of the experiences and learning outcomes of SA on the part of students from diverse backgrounds for both research and program evaluation purposes.

## 3.3 Topics in research on equity

Having discussed possible theoretical and methodological approaches for examining equity in language-focused SA research, we conclude by providing two additional tasks related to specific topics future research could explore. First, we discuss the development of language-focused SA programs to implement equitable policies and practices and then turn to online international education as one alternative to conventional SA.

### 3.3.1 Language-focused SA programs designed with equity in mind

Recent scholarship has identified a host of practices common to SA programs that may reinforce inequities faced by racially and ethnically marginalized students, multilingual students, and host communities. As described above, marginalized students may face racial discrimination from peers and locals and may be subject to curricula centered on whiteness and lacking in diverse voices (e.g., Goldoni, 2017; Johnstone et al., 2020; Ohito et al., 2021). Monolingual bias in SA programs may lead to practices that erase and/or disparage the rich linguistic repertoires that multilingual students employ to communicate and construct identities by, for instance, privileging a monolingual native speaker norm as the learning target (e.g., Goldoni, 2021; Trentman & Diao, 2021). In terms of host communities, SA program administrators do not always take into account the impact on local people and whether initiatives are mutually beneficial for both visiting students and host communities. As an example, assessments of the outcomes of service learning or volunteer projects do not always include the perspectives of host community members, but rather, commonly focus only on SA students' experiences (Ficarra, 2021; Sharpe, 2015).

Various authors have proposed changes in practices to enhance equity and resist neocolonialism in SA programs (e.g., Goldoni, 2021; Graml & Meyer-Lee, 2021; Ohito et al., 2021; Villarreal Sosa & Lesniewski, 2020). Writing about language-based SA programs specifically, Goldoni argued for a shift in focus: "Diversity, equity, inclusion and dignity need to become primary goals of SA. A social justice approach to SA is a powerful alternative to the neoliberal discourses, and it can help students gain global understanding, compassion, and increase communication skills" (p. 5). However, little research to date has examined language-focused SA programs designed with equity in mind and how various strategies to enhance equity can be implemented successfully. Research is needed to identify policies and practices that are successful in achieving equitable outcomes for students and host communities in language-focused SA programs.

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**Research task 8**

**Develop and research language-focused SA programs that are designed to implement equitable policies and practices.**

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**Exemplar:** The growing literature on promoting equity in SA programs offers a wealth of proposals that can serve as the starting point. We provide only a few such examples. An initial consideration is the SA site: work by Anya (2017, 2021) highlights the importance of providing racially/ethnically

marginalized students the option to study in communities that represent their identities (e.g., offering programs in Black-majority communities). Similarly, Anya (2021) advocated that programs select host families with diverse backgrounds, so that students can choose a family that shares their racial/ethnic identity. Further, training for host families to raise awareness about sociolinguistic diversity may help prevent linguistic discrimination toward multilingual students who speak contact or non-prestigious varieties of a language (Riegelhaupt & Carrasco, 2000). Finally, recognizing and celebrating the translingual practices of students from a recent immigrant background can facilitate those students' development of language awareness and flexibility in linguistic repertoire (Quan & Menard-Warwick, 2021).

The curriculum is another important factor: including the viewpoints of marginalized people and presenting them as agents, rather than stereotypes (Anya, 2021), and considering how the process of curriculum mapping may perpetuate a Euro-centric bias or, alternatively, be inclusive for minoritized students (Ohito et al., 2021) are suggestions to further work toward equity during curriculum development. Additionally, Sharpe (2015) recommended interrogating how the host community is positioned in curricular materials to avoid centering students and leading to their developing a "tourist gaze" that others and objectifies local people. Instructors also play a crucial role in creating equitable experiences for students, particularly in their ability to facilitate respectful and inclusive interactions among students from different backgrounds and to lead students in critical reflection that addresses issues of privilege and inequity within the SA group, as well as in the larger society (Johnstone et al., 2020).

After developing a SA program with practices intended to promote equity, researchers can examine the outcomes and identify successes and areas for improvement. Outcomes of SA (e.g., L2/multilingual skills, intercultural competence, identity development, degree and nature of social interaction) can be measured through assessments (for various types of assessment in SA, see, e.g., Savicki & Brewer, 2015) and then the results can be disaggregated by student race/ethnicity, as advocated by Bensimon and colleagues (Witham et al., 2015), to investigate whether policies and practices in the SA program led to equitable outcomes for racialized students. Qualitative methodologies can be employed to investigate the experiences of marginalized students. For example, Johnstone et al. (2020) held focus groups with students traditionally underrepresented in SA (i.e., students of color, first-generation college students, low-income students) to better understand their experiences during SA. The authors identified practices on the part of faculty in SA that were inclusive and empowering to marginalized students, as well as those that were "prejudicial and isolating" (p. 120). Anya's (2017, 2021) approach to examining Black American students' experiences abroad in Brazil included video-recordings of classes and excursions, interviews with students, journals, language-learning autobiographies, and field notes. Findings indicated that the location in a Black-majority community and the focus on Blackness and Afro-Brazilian culture in the curriculum led to positive identity- and language-related outcomes for Black students. More research is needed to inform efforts to create inclusive SA programs.

### 3.3.2 Virtual SA as an alternative to conventional SA

The cost of studying abroad has long been a barrier for low-income students (e.g., Simon & Ainsworth, 2012) and the COVID-19 pandemic created an additional hurdle. In the US, for example, the number of incoming international students and outgoing domestic students fell 15% and 53%, respectively, for the 2019–20 academic year (IIE, 2020), likely owing primarily to the global pandemic. In the context of the pandemic and with the goal of promoting equitable access to international experiences, some scholars proposed that online education that connects students across borders— recently termed "virtual SA" —might be an effective alternative to conventional SA programs (e.g., Glass & Gesing, 2022; Joseph & Johnson, 2020; Liu & Shirley, 2021). Community-engaged learning, in which students work with L2-speaking residents of their own country is another valuable alternative to SA, but we focus here on virtual SA to maintain focus on the international component.

Although various approaches to online international education have been described, the Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL) model is one of the most frequently cited (e.g., Asojo et al., 2019; Guth & Rubin, 2015; Liu & Shirley, 2021; Nava-Aguirre et al., 2019; Vahed & Rodriguez, 2020; see also the SUNY Center for Collaborative Online International Learning, 2019). COIL involves partnerships between institutions of higher education in two or more countries in which students from those regions work together online with faculty from the participating countries. Typically, faculty from partner institutions plan and design their courses together so that, although students receive credit for a course at their respective institutions, they collaborate together as if they were in the same course. Course learning activities can include lectures by faculty and talks by guest speakers in both countries, student discussions, student projects, peer feedback, and virtual reality tours. Technology tools such as videoconferencing software and virtual reality platforms enable faculty and students to interact remotely both synchronously and asynchronously. The goal in the COIL approach is for students to not only master the course material, but to also explore the topic in question from different cultural perspectives in collaboration with international peers and faculty, while gaining new knowledge and skills in technology use and intercultural communication (e.g., Asojo et al., 2019).

Within applied linguistics, online intercultural exchanges or telecollaboration are terms that have been used to describe language-focused online international education. In this case, students from universities in two different countries who speak different languages work together online to learn each other's language and culture. Some telecollaboration projects primarily involve an e-tandem exchange in which students in the two classes are paired to converse in each language synchronously (e.g., videoconferencing) or asynchronously (e.g., discussion forums). The *Cultura* model (Furstenberg et al., 2001), in contrast, integrates the exchange more extensively into the course, as the two student groups collaborate to analyze and discuss a series of texts in both their L1 and L2, focusing on cultural comparisons. *Cultura*-style exchanges require more preparation and collaboration on the part of faculty from the partner institutions, similar to the COIL model described above.

Two decades of research on telecollaboration for language learning suggest that such exchanges can, indeed, be beneficial for the development of L2 skills, intercultural competence, and global citizenship (e.g., Godwin-Jones, 2019; O'Dowd, 2020). Of particular importance is the opportunity for students to interact with expert-speaking age peers (e.g., Kinginger, 2016). Potential pitfalls of telecollaboration have also been identified in previous studies. Language use may be limited to the classroom, which reduces the range of communicative settings in which students can gain L2 skills and emphasizes students' identities as "learners." Ineffective error-correction on the part of peers, cross-cultural miscommunication, and reinforcement of cultural stereotypes are other attested negative outcomes in some exchanges (e.g., Chun, 2014; Godwin-Jones, 2019). Careful design is crucial for telecollaboration success, as Godwin-Jones observed: "linguistic and intercultural gains are by no means automatic and . . . exchanges need to be set up with care as well as with an awareness of best practices" (p. 8).

Given the potential benefits of online international education for L2 learning, intercultural competence, and cross-cultural experience, this model may be an effective alternative for those who do not have the opportunity to participate in conventional SA. Joseph and Johnson (2020) further suggested that online international courses might result in better learning outcomes than short-term SA programs in which students' emphasis is on "edutourism" and their interaction with local people is superficial or lacking. Indeed, SA students often struggle to develop social networks with local people in the host country, even when their stays are longer and they are motivated to do so (e.g., Coleman, 2015; McManus et al., 2014). However, research is needed to determine in what ways language-focused virtual SA compares with conventional SA in terms of learning outcomes and equitable access.

**Research task 9**

Compare virtual and conventional SA programs examining student learning outcomes and equity indicators for each setting.

**Exemplar**: Research on language learning in SA has, from early on, made comparisons of the learning outcomes of a sojourn abroad and with those of other learning contexts, namely, "at home" in a traditional foreign language classroom or in a domestic immersion program (e.g., Kinginger, 2009). However, few previous studies have considered how conventional SA compares specifically with virtual SA. One existing study by Lee and Song (2019) determined that a six-week telecollaboration project was nearly as beneficial as a six-week SA in improvement of intercultural communicative competence over time. Future research could compare the two educational settings with regard to additional outcomes such as L2/multilingual skills, identity development, opportunities for engagement, among others. Further, virtual and conventional SA can be compared based on equity indicators, such as equitable participation by low-income students from different racial/ethnic backgrounds.

Although various research designs are possible, one example would be for a researcher/instructor to offer the same course in the short-term SA format and then also from home in the collaborative online international education format, collecting data from students in both course formats. The researcher could compare various outcomes of both course formats, looking at factors such as composition of social networks with host country individuals, quantity and quality of L2 social interaction, as well as academic, personal, and identity outcomes. This example research could also investigate student demographics in each course format and determine whether the virtual SA course engaged students who would not have otherwise had access to international experiences.

The goal of comparing virtual and conventional SA would not be to dissuade students from physically going abroad nor to substitute conventional SA, but rather to determine whether virtual SA might be a viable option to achieve some of the same learning outcomes associated with conventional SA, but with the potential to reach more students and provide them with enhanced international learning opportunities. Indeed, virtual SA can also be employed as a complement to SA; telecollaborative experiences can assist students in preparing for a subsequent trip abroad or to continue their learning after returning from an international sojourn (Kinginger, 2016; Trentman, 2021). Institutions of higher education should also seek ways to make SA more accessible to low-income students by, for instance, prioritizing SA scholarships for students with financial need.

## 4. Conclusion

Given that recent research has revealed ways that participation in SA and experiences during SA have been inequitable for students from marginalized groups, in this article we have suggested that future research examine how to work toward equity in language-focused SA. Such a focus would not only have the potential to benefit SA students, but also to enrich our understanding of language practices in SA by considering the voices and experiences of students from groups that are underrepresented in the existing literature, as well as in SA participation. We identified nine research tasks related to theoretical frameworks, methodological approaches, and research topics that could be implemented in future research with a focus on equitable policies, practices, outcomes, and research activities in language-focused SA. We also discussed previous studies that indicate that language-focused SA could serve as a site where the principles of educational equity could productively be implemented. This, in turn, leads to a need for further rigorous research at the intersection of SA and equity-minded L2 teaching and learning. Specifically, strategic efforts to collaborate among scholarly practitioners from diverse backgrounds, including those affiliated with minority-serving institutions, could help promote equity-minded SA research, practically, methodologically, and theoretically.

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