

## Study abroad as professional development for FSL teachers

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### **Abstract**

In July 2009, a group of over 80 FSL teachers from British Columbia (BC) participated in a two-week sojourn at the *Centre d'Approches vivantes des Langues et des Médias* (CAVILAM) in Vichy, France, as part of an initiative to address the critical shortage of qualified French language teachers in the province. After almost four decades of study abroad (SA) research, the literature offers little insight into teachers' professional development abroad. The following article attempts to situate the recent sojourn of the BC teachers within the field by presenting an overview of some of the major research trends of SA research as well as summarizing how teachers have been acknowledged in the literature to date. A description of the program at CAVILAM and the current research study is presented to highlight some of the emerging opportunities for future research on teacher education within a SA context.

### **Résumé**

En juillet 2009, un groupe d'environ 80 enseignants de FLS de la Colombie-Britannique (C-B) a participé à un séjour de deux semaines au Centre d'approches vivantes des langues et des Médias (CAVILAM) à Vichy en France dans le cadre d'une initiative visant à remédier le manque d'enseignants qualifiés dans les programmes de français. Jusqu'à présent très peu de recherches ont été réalisées sur le perfectionnement professionnel des enseignants à travers les programmes d'études à l'étranger. Afin de situer le séjour des enseignants de la C-B dans le domaine des recherches, l'article ci-dessous présente un aperçu des recherches principales sur les séjours à l'étranger ainsi qu'un résumé des quelques études qui sont liées à la formation des enseignants à l'étranger. La description du programme CAVILAM et de l'étude de recherche proposée sert à donner des lignes directrices pour de futures recherches sur le perfectionnement professionnel des enseignants à l'étranger.

## Study abroad as professional development for FSL teachers

### Introduction

In Canada, learning French as a second language (FSL) is understood not only in terms of learning the “other” official language or adopting a Canadian civic identity, but also as investing in “cultural capital” (Norton, 2000) as part of today’s global society (Byrd Clark, 2008; Dagenais, 2003). Canada’s FSL programs of French immersion and core French, with the recent addition of intensive French, constitute part of a continuing effort to increase French language proficiency of students across the country (Carr, 2007a; Chelali, Logie, & Carr, 2009). A major challenge in meeting the continued demand for French language education is the critical need for effective professional development and teacher education for FSL teachers, especially in Western non-francophone areas of the country such as British Columbia (BC) (Bournot-Trites, 2008b; Lapkin, MacFarlane, & Vandergrift, 2006; MacFarlane & Hart, 2002; Steffenhagen, 2010). Although student inter-provincial exchange programs are well established across the country and promoted through high school and post-secondary programs, by the time students enter the French language classroom as teachers themselves, many will never have experienced a French-speaking environment or have had extended contact with speakers of French outside the classroom (Carr, 2007b). A recent survey report of teachers’ perspectives in core French programs conducted in the province of BC summarizes the issue this way:

...the pressing challenge for BC’s core French teachers appears to be how to achieve provincial learning outcomes with the lack of time allocated to French instruction and low levels of teacher language proficiency and methodological background (Carr, 2007b).

Specialized programs in methodology for FSL teachers offered by the province’s research universities are expanding to address the need for formal FSL teacher training (Carr, 2009). In addition to summer immersion institutes, French teacher educators and administrators are turning to professional development opportunities in the form of study abroad as a further approach to dealing with these challenges. One such initiative organized and coordinated by the British Columbia Teacher Federation (BCTF) recently found support from the BC Ministry of Education resulting in over eighty BC FSL teachers participating in a two-week sojourn, in July 2009, at the *Centre d’Approches vivantes des Langues et des Médias* (CAVILAM), a centre for French language studies and pedagogy in Vichy, France.

In light of the dearth of studies centering specifically on teachers within the field of study abroad (SA) research, this sojourn provides a welcome opportunity to explore the potential contributions of learning abroad for teacher-participants. A year-long qualitative multiple case study is currently in progress, involving an examination of the teachers’ experiences in France as well as an investigation of how these experiences directly or indirectly affect classroom practices at home and shape the professional identity of teachers within the context of teaching French in BC. Within the field of study abroad research in general, scholars such as Celeste Kinginger (2009) are calling for more in-depth study of individual learning experiences of SA participants

to account for the complexity of the learning context and the motivations and histories different language learners bring to a study abroad experience (Kinging, 2008b). Given the varied trajectories and identities of French language teachers within the officially bilingual Canadian context, research on professional development abroad has the potential to provide key insights as to how teachers understand their own language expertise as French speakers within their communities of practice (Hall, Cheng, & Carlson, 2006; Lave & Wenger, 1991).

This article begins with an outline of the major research trends of SA as a context for language learning and takes stock of the present situation of language teachers studying abroad. A description of the teachers' sojourn from BC follows with an overview of the program at CAVILAM and a brief introduction to the study currently underway.

### **Major Trends in Study Abroad Research**

Studying a language abroad is typically considered to be one of the most effective ways to acquire another language, a view predominantly supported by the earliest research dating back to the mid 1960s. More recent studies on the outcomes, processes, and experiences of language learning in an SA context, particularly conducted over the past twenty years, present a more complex picture of what it means to learn a language abroad. As summarized by Kinginger:

The results...show that while SA is certainly a productive context for language learning, its outcomes are neither as dramatic nor as equally distributed among students as one might hope they would be (2008a, p.1).

Generally speaking, the focus of research on language learning in a study abroad context has moved from an interest in holistic language proficiency to an emphasis on particular aspects of language acquisition and learning (Kinging, 2008a). This change is accompanied by a shift away from exclusively product-oriented studies to an increasing interest in the language learning processes involved in a study abroad context. Based on one of the first compilations of North American studies on language learning abroad (Freed, 1995) as well as Freed's overview of the research literature (1998) in a special volume of *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad*, these SA studies constitute two main areas: 1) the evaluation of linguistic abilities such as oral fluency, communication strategies, and sociolinguistics skills, and 2) an examination of the perceptions of students' experiences abroad and the impact of these perceptions on the learning process, without necessarily involving an assessment of learner outcomes. Four decades ago, John Carroll's (1967) large scale evaluation of American secondary students learning a foreign language set the stage for a series of test-based studies measuring acquired linguistic proficiency of SA learners during the 1970s. Primarily based on the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages' (ACTFL) Oral Proficiency Interview, the reliability of some of this research has since been questioned based on the short duration of the studies, the lack of control groups, and the researchers' sole reliance on test-scores as failing to address qualitative changes in the students' language learning (Collentine & Freed, 2004; Freed, 1998).

During the 1990s, large scale quantitative and qualitative studies involving multiple institutions assessed acquired language proficiency of language learners, the largest of these a

study of American students in Russia (Brecht, Davidson, & Ginsburg, 1995; Freed, 1998). These large-scale studies found language learning abroad to support linguistic progress, specifically in the areas of reading and oral fluency. Smaller scale individual studies, conducted during the 1980s and 1990s, often contradicted these findings and instead brought to light the large variation of differences among individual learners, an aspect also of recent findings (DuFon & Churchill, 2006; Kinginger, 2008b). These smaller studies set the trend for the type of research conducted in the latter half of the last decade with a focus on sociolinguistic norms, vocabulary acquisition, and students' experiences abroad (Freed, 1998).

Freed (1998) presents four areas of studies undertaken over the past decade. The first involves studies considering factors allowing for the prediction of learning outcomes in addition to measuring linguistic progress of students participating in SA language programs (Brecht et al., 1995; Lapkin, Hart, & Swain, 1995). The second area of studies takes a comparative approach by examining SA learning versus foreign language learning in classroom contexts at home (AH), with one of the most significant findings being the large amount of individual variation among study abroad students in terms of gender, cultural, and ethnic identity (DeKeyser, 1991; Freed, 1995; Huebner, 1995). Similar findings were brought to light by a third set of studies of sociolinguistic competence in immersion settings (Marriott, 1995; Regan, 1995; Siegal, 1995), while the fourth area of SA research considers students' experiences and the manner in which the sociocultural context and the students' interactions with the speakers in the sojourn setting impact their learning process.

A tabulated summary of SA studies conducted in the US between 1998 and 2005 (Kinging, 2005) and an overview of evolving research in language learning abroad (DuFon & Churchill, 2006) present a picture of research undertaken over the past decade. In the most recent review of the literature, Celeste Kinginger offers a critical look at SA research with a "recognition of the historical and ideological contexts" of the studies conducted to date (Kinging, 2009, p.6). The author locates her definition of study abroad on a continuum between migration on one end and tourism on the other, and characterizes the major trends in the field by tracing the evolution of SA research as reflected within the greater field of applied linguistics. Beginning with outcome-oriented studies based on holistic conceptions of language proficiency, Kinginger moves her discussion to studies examining particular aspects of communicative competence, followed by a focus on research exploring the nature of the activities and communicative settings in a study abroad context and the impact of these on the students' language learning. The final area of research, with which the study described below is most closely affiliated, considers the relationship between language, culture, and identity as documented in students' interactions with members in the host community. The focus of these studies is on understanding the experiences of study abroad participants as reflected in the degree to which the students socialize into the community abroad and the manner in which they negotiate their positions in social interaction with others based on their own sociocultural resources.

Kinging's "critical reading" of the literature stresses how the approach to SA research has shifted from viewing study abroad as simply another variable of language learning to a focus on the complexity of the context itself. Equally noteworthy is that Kinginger's overview underscores the prominence in the literature given to students from Western countries, to the

detriment of learners from Latin America, Africa, and Asia, as noted by the author with reference to David Block's (2007) critique of the research to date. This is certainly reflected in the focus of current edited compilations on language learners travelling primarily between Europe and North America and to Japan, (Byram & Feng, 2006; DeWaard Dykstr, 2006; DuFon & Churchill, 2006) and may present a possible answer as to the lack of studies on teachers in the study abroad literature.

An extensive review of European study abroad research is provided by Jim Coleman (1998) with a look at the historical, political, and geographical contexts that have shaped "residence abroad" in Europe particularly over the last fifty years. Within the context of the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), concepts such as mobility, interculturalism, and plurilingualism constitute quasi-mantras of the new "European identity" (Little, 2002; Murphy-Lejeune, 2002) and study abroad is increasingly recognized as an integral element of vocational training and general education (Ehrenreich, Woodman, & Perrefort, (2008). One of the largest student exchange organizations, the *Erasmus Student Network* (<http://www.esn.org>), promotes student mobility in higher education across 32 countries and is likely the largest source providing data for SA research in Europe today with a current focus on learning outcomes in categories including academic, cultural, intercultural, linguistic, personal, and professional aspects of residence abroad (Coleman, 2008).

The considerable variation among individual language learners (Dewey, 2004; Diaz-Campos, 2004; Freed, Segalowitz, & Dewey, 2004) and the complexity of the context itself (Kinging, 2008b) have led to a call for studies which link quantitative, product-oriented inquiry of linguistic gains with a qualitative examination of the sociocultural interactions and the learning processes of the learners studying abroad. The more critical and varied approach SA research has taken over the past few years is reflected in the current literature, which presents a wide range of language learning aspects such as linguistic proficiency gains, the acquisition of pragmatic abilities, motivation, learning strategies and learner interactions with host speakers (DuFon & Churchill, 2006), the challenges of self-presentation in an SA context (Pellegrino Aveni, 2005), and the acquisition of sociolinguistic competence from a variationist perspective (Regan, Howard, & Lemée, 2009). Increasingly, researchers are opting for an in-depth approach to better "understand the development of language competence in relation to the life histories and particular, concrete experiences of individual students" (Kinging, 2007, p.2). Kinginger (2008a) has noted that studies adopting this approach have shown that precise documentation of students' activities provides credible links between the nature of learner experiences and learning outcomes. Her most recent work includes an ethnographic multiple case study of American French language students in France (Kinging, 2008b), which counters the view that "non-native speakers" constitute a single homogenous group and argues for the acknowledgement of the individual social identities of SA learners.

Kinging's appeal for more in-depth study stems from the increasing "interpretive difficulties" of SA research, particularly in light of the fact that study abroad has often been understood "as a unitary variable" (2008b, p.3). The author highlights the value of a qualitative case study methodology with reference to the following three trends evident in the literature: 1) findings which reveal individual differences of learner achievement outcomes, 2) a new focus on correlating specific activities of students with achievement measures and thus replacing the

previously held assumption that study abroad provides an automatic immersion context, and 3) the fact that “language use involves a complex interplay of students’ dispositions and those of their interlocutors” (Kinging, 2008b, p.3).

With an increasing emphasis on the social dimension in second language acquisition research (Block, 2003; Firth & Wagner, 1997), language learning is no longer viewed as merely acquiring linguistic knowledge but rather as engaging in the social and cultural practices of another community of language users (Kinging, 2004; Kramsch & Whiteside, 2007). SA learners in particular experience language as a social and cultural reality as opposed to simply a system of linguistic representation (Collentine & Freed, 2004). The concept of language ability has in the past remained relatively unquestioned in the field of SA research, with language competence (Bachman & Palmer, 1996; Canale & Swain, 1980) viewed primarily as an attribute of the individual learner and constructs such as proficiency linked to a preoccupation with accuracy and an idealized “native speaker” (Kramsch, 1986). In response to the need for more research of “learners’ interactive positioning in language socialization abroad” (Kinging, 2009, p.204) the study examining the impact of the BC teachers’ sojourn in Vichy, France, adopts a methodological approach which takes into account the co-constructed nature of language learning through social interaction (Hall, 1995; Young & He, 1998).

### **Teachers on study abroad**

As far back as a century ago, scholars suggested that study abroad (SA) be an integral part of language teacher education (Kalivoda, 1977; Rossmann, 1896; Schulz, 2000; Tedick, 2009). To date, however, there exists very little research specifically on teachers studying abroad (Byram & Feng, 2006; Ehrenreich, 2008) with existing literature reviews not explicitly differentiating teachers from students. The few studies examining teacher sojourns have either been conducted only very recently or are still undergoing analysis.

In North America, the earliest of the studies examining teacher education abroad is an evaluation of a program for French and Spanish language teachers organized by the Florida Department of Education between 1990 and 1993 (Badía, 1994). The duration of the sojourns ranged from two to four weeks, with program sites located in Quebec and France or in Costa Rica and Spain. The sojourns involved fieldwork as well as classroom time, with quantitative and qualitative data generated from questionnaires, journals, interviews, and external evaluative reports and results showing “dramatic” gains in language proficiency, cultural knowledge, and teaching strategies. A more recent study describes the attitudes of a middle-class Mexican family toward the Spanish of a Chicano bilingual teacher from the United States (Riegelhaupt & Carrasco, 2000). The emphasis of this study is, however, on the teacher’s identity as a heritage language learner and as such does not relate directly to the issue of teachers on study abroad.

Most of the research undertaken to date falls within the European context and centres on teaching assistants residing for a year in another European country while teaching in their first language (L1) abroad. Typically, these participants are enrolled in a post-secondary program in their home country and opt to experience life in another linguistic and cultural environment. Their career goals do not necessarily include language teaching and as the studies show, many do not end up in the teaching profession. Among this research is an interview study of 30 British

teaching assistants on a year-abroad in France conducted in the early 1990s and followed up a decade and a half later with a retroactive interview study examining the impact of the participants' experiences abroad on later life and career choices (Byram & Alred, 1992; 2006). Similarly, Elizabeth Murphy-Lejeune (2002) documents the experiences of nineteen teaching assistants who form part of a group of 50 participants, including Erasmus and EAP students, on a year abroad in France and Ireland. Based on questionnaire and interview data, the teaching assistants experience the highest level of social integration during their stay when compared to the other two groups of participants, likely due to their professional engagement with target language speakers. Susanne Ehrenreich's (2004, 2008) retroactive study of twenty EFL (English as a foreign language) student teachers on a professional training sojourn centres on the teachers' knowledge base, professional identity development, and intercultural learning with findings mirroring those of Byram & Alred's 2006 study. The significant variation among the participants is attributed to factors of personality and individual life histories. Furthermore, participants from both studies demonstrated a noticeable shift in focus from the language itself to an emphasis on social networks and intercultural mediation. A further study exploring the learning experiences of German-speaking EFL student teachers was recently conducted by Müller-Hartmann and Schocker von Dithfurth (2008).

Research involving participants from both North America and Europe in a collaborative international exchange program was conducted between 2003 and 2005 with a focus on interdisciplinarity and intercultural learning (Bournot-Trites, 2008a; Thomas, Verrier, Beauchamp, & Holgado, 2007). The project<sup>1</sup> involved three European<sup>2</sup> and three Canadian universities<sup>3</sup> and offered twenty-four teacher education candidates from both continents the opportunity to teach in their second or foreign language. Participants from Canada, including two Spanish teachers and three French teachers, spent four months in Spain and France respectively teaching in the host country language. Analysis of the questionnaires completed by students and administrators presented on the whole positive findings, especially from student teachers who reported improved language performance, greater knowledge of European school systems and pedagogical approaches, an increased awareness of language use in different cultural contexts, and a heightened sense of what it means to be a language teacher in Canada.

While the Canadian federal government's renewal of its 2003 mandate to promote French-English linguistic duality in Canada includes funding for summer language bursaries (Treasury Board of Canada, 2009), there exists very little systematic or in-depth assessment of these programs which would help establish the efficacy of this type of professional development for teachers. The evaluation of a 2008 French-immersion sojourn for FSL teachers at the *Centre de leadership et d'aventure en nature* in Powell River, BC, produced a total of fifteen completed questionnaires (Bergeron, email communication, March 3, 2009). An informal perusal of the

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<sup>1</sup> This program, known as the Wide Interdisciplinary System in Education or WISE, emphasises student mobility and teacher development and forms part of the Student Mobility Project (SMP) of the Canada-European Community Program for Co-operation in Higher Education.

<sup>2</sup> IUFM Champagne-Ardenne, France; Uni Rovira i Virgili Tarragone, Spain; and St. Martin's College/Lancaster University, UK

<sup>3</sup> University of British Columbia; Bishop's University; and Université de Sherbrooke

comments provided in the questionnaires brings to light the diverse range of interests in terms of linguistic and cultural knowledge of French, both across and within the two levels of participants. The need for more and/or longer professional development opportunities of this kind is a reoccurring theme, based on the views expressed by the participants that class time seemed too rushed and that a greater diversity of activities as well as more opportunities to speak French could improve the program. As will be apparent from the description in the next section, the study abroad program at CAVILAM in which a large group of FSL teachers from BC had an opportunity to participate in the summer of 2009, has sought to meet some of those recommendations.

### **FSL teachers on study abroad in France in 2009**

In her analysis of study abroad discourse in American higher education, Joan Elias Gore (2005) investigates how dominant beliefs in North America have come to define sojourns abroad as academically weak and without significant functional purpose. Her examination of traditionally held conceptions of SA as a “Grand Tour” primarily associated with wealthy female students are countered with “alternative voices” from teachers, administrators, and students whose experiences abroad constitute SA “as a functionally worthwhile, professionally valid, and academically strong model of education” (2005, p.106). The following description of the two-week program at the *Centre d’Approches vivantes des Langues et des Médias* (CAVILAM) for the FSL teachers from BC presents another “alternative voice” to the dominant discourse identified by Gore.

#### **The CAVILAM Program**

Funded by the BC Ministry of Education and supported by district French coordinators, the study abroad program at the *Centre d’Approches vivantes des Langues et des Médias* was specifically conceived for BC FSL teachers in core French, intensive French, and French immersion programs under the coordination of the French Language Services Branch of the BC Teachers’ Federation and in conjunction with the direction of the CAVILAM programs. The program consisted of classroom instruction, group workshops and lectures in French language and pedagogy, an orientation to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) and a specialized one- or two-week training course in the administration, correction, and implementation of the *Diplôme d’Études en Langue Française* (DELFL)—an international French language exam based on CEFR learning and assessment guidelines. A wide range of cultural activities were offered as part of the general cultural program at CAVILAM on weekday afternoons and evenings and on weekends, and accommodation for most participants was provided through CAVILAM with host families in Vichy or in the vicinity.

The application process for participation in the sojourn was conducted by French language coordinators in school districts across the province in collaboration with the BCTF. Teachers with a francophone background or “native-like” proficiency in French were encouraged to apply for the full two-week DELFL certification (Level III), while pedagogy workshops (Level II) and language classes (Level I) were available for those participants wishing to improve their

teaching strategies or use of French. Selection for each program level was thus in part based on the applicant's level of French language expertise while other criteria included the number of available spaces, as well as a willingness to participate in future initiatives involving the potential adaptation of the CEFR framework in French language curricula in BC.

### **Classroom Instruction**

Despite the division of the participants into three separate program levels, there was ample occasion for the teachers to come together at various times during the day to experience different aspects of the CAVILAM program and to mingle with students outside of the BC group. This was particularly the case for those in Levels I and II. Level III participants were divided into two classes for the two-week DELF-certification sessions and were taught by a certified instructor from the *Centre international d'études pédagogiques* (CIEP), a branch of the French government's Ministry of Education. These DELF-sessions were interspersed with classes introducing teaching strategies to support the implementation process of the DELF exam and were taught by three CAVILAM instructors.

Participants who did not take part of the intensive two-week DELF-training were encouraged to undergo a language assessment on the first day for placement in either Level I or II of the program. It should be noted that there was some flexibility for participants with a more advanced level of French to choose between the pedagogy or language program<sup>4</sup>. Participants in the pedagogy program (Level II) took part in *Les parcours thématiques* during the first week of the sojourn, an intensive course program offering a wide variety of pedagogical strategies for the teaching of French at different grade levels. These courses were also taken by other international students at CAVILAM and thus allowed the BC teachers to interact with other French language teachers from abroad. The *parcours* was followed up with a week of intensive DELF training, also specifically designed for the BC teachers. Teachers in Level I, along with other CAVILAM summer students, attended morning language classes and afternoon conversation workshops for the entire two-week period based on the results of the initial language assessment, which ranged from levels A2 to C1 in accordance with the CEFR descriptor guidelines. This group of teachers was also introduced to the CEFR and the DELF during two afternoon sessions each week with the CIEP instructor.

### **Cultural Immersion**

In addition to the daily two-hour midday break, participants from the three groups had an opportunity to reconnect during the "discovery" lectures (*Séances «Découverte»*) held on two afternoons each week as well as during the numerous cultural activities organized by CAVILAM. Historical visits included excursions through Vichy and to neighbouring towns such as the medieval village of Charroux and the town of Riom as well as a hike up the Puy de Dôme, one of the region's most renowned volcanoes. Evening activities included a choice between an

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<sup>4</sup> Advanced here refers to participants demonstrating between a B2 and C1 level of French language proficiency on the placement test.

outdoor theatre performance in the neighbouring town of Cusset or a movie on the CAVILAM campus. The weekend excursion organized specifically for the BC teachers consisted of a bus trip through the Auvergne region with visits to the town of Orcival and its Roman Basilica, a midday culinary experience in a farmhouse outside the town of St. Nectaire, and a late afternoon wine and cheese tasting at the town market of Besse. As part of the cultural program, the teachers were also treated to two “tastings” of local pastry, cheese, and wines by CAVILAM, a reception with the deputy mayor of Vichy at city hall, and a meeting with the Vice-Director of the CIEP and a representative of the French government’s Ministry of Foreign and European Affairs. Accommodation with local families in Vichy or the vicinity provided a further significant contribution to the participants’ experiences with speakers of French. Lengthy evening dinners at the families’ homes were frequently discussed among the teachers and for most participants a much-anticipated conclusion to each day. These meals and family discussions constituted not only another foray into French cuisine but also an opportunity to learn about, and become familiar with, aspects of life within each particular family and the community as a whole, all within the greater context of France.

### **The Research Study**

In line with qualitative methodological approaches in education and second language research (Duff, 2008; Kinginger, 2008a; Merriam, 1998; Tedick, 2005), the study currently underway examines the impact of the sojourn on a small group of the teacher-participants through a 2-phase qualitative multiple case study. Case study research, commonly used in applied linguistics, lends itself to an exploratory longitudinal approach (Duff, 2008) and as such to an exploration of the varied nature of SA learners’ experiences abroad. In addition to providing participants with new linguistic, cultural, and pedagogical knowledge, the sojourn in France has allowed the teachers to interact with other speakers of French in a range of different settings from which to draw on back home. In an effort to better understand how these experiences and resources are taken up, the central research questions of the study include: 1) How do the participants understand the experiences of their immersion abroad? 2) How has the sojourn impacted their teaching practices? 3) How do the participants construct their professional identity as speakers and teachers of French in BC within their communities of practice?

The first phase of the study was conducted in France in July 2009 and generated data in the form of pre- and post-questionnaires, participant journals, audio/video recorded classroom interaction, informal interviews, and descriptive and reflective field notes. The second phase of the study, currently underway, constitutes a one-year follow-up in BC involving a small group of the teacher-participants from both core French and French immersion programs using recorded classroom observations, interviews, and journals in both French and English. Given the focus on the teachers’ social interactions as members of their professional communities, transcribed data will be analysed using both thematic as well as detailed discourse analysis. As one of many initiatives to address the need for FSL teacher development in BC, it is hoped that this study will contribute to SA research, especially in light of the scant existing amount of literature on teacher professional development abroad.

## Conclusion

The study abroad program at CAVILAM has provided a wide variety of learning experiences for the FSL teachers from BC, including the potential benefit of increased language expertise, new insights gained from interactions with speakers of French from France and from around the world, and a range of new teaching strategies and materials. While students tend to focus on learning as a means of acquiring more knowledge, teachers are more often engaging in new knowledge with the view of later transforming this into learning opportunities for their own students. This raises the question as to why the distinction between teachers and students on study abroad is not more prominent in the research literature. Given the growing emphasis on the internationalization of education programs (Kubota, 2009), a clearer understanding of what constitutes effective professional development abroad will make sojourn opportunities within local communities in both BC and Canada more salient and, it is hoped, contribute to FSL teacher development in a meaningful way.

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