Second Language Learnerhood Among Cross-Cultural Field Workers

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SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERHOOD AMONG CROSS-CULTURAL FIELD WORKERS

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation studies second language learnerhood (ideologies about why and how to acquire a target language) among American field workers of a multinational, faith-based development organization, “Love the World”. This organizational ethnography is longitudinal, tracking how learnerhood changes across the first years of field service. It is also multi-sited, tracing learnerhood across an assemblage of interconnected nodes. Field workers’ learnerhoods are shaped by two larger ideologies of language learning which interact across the nodes of and individual trajectories through Love the World. One ideology, rooted in academic tradition, developmental second language acquisition and modernist missiological theory, valorizes the individual learner (the locus of abstract knowledge and skills) who seeks to acquire a reified heart language. Such heart language belongs to and defines host nationals living at each field site. Another ideology, rooted in sociocultural pedagogical methods, emphasizes distributed cognition, linguistic repertoires and community participation. Against the backdrop of changing realities of language use which accompany globalization, tensions between these two ideologies of learnerhood affect the success of field workers’ attempts to perform their host language identities and their organizational duties at 13 field sites across Europe.

Because Love the World tends to devolve policy making and accountability for language acquisition to ever more local organizational scales, individuals are left to draw heavily from their own personal models of learnerhood and folk ideologies of language
acquisition, rather than on institutional training, when deciding how to pursue target language proficiency. To analyze this process, the construct of learnerhood is grounded within sociolinguistic and second language acquisition theory, and then contextualized within the assemblage of missions and development organizations. This involves describing these organizations’ advocacy for and adoption of sociocultural pedagogical methodologies, such as Greg Thomson’s Growing Participator Approach. Next, learnerhood is described from three perspectives, first by identifying frequently emerging themes common across the different sites and then by analyzing these themes from both a spatial-hierarchical and an ontogenetic perspective. Finally, I identify consequences of the ways that learnerhoods develop within Love the World, suggesting practical applications for transnational organizations to better prepare language learners and implement sociocultural methodologies.
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>ACTFL</td>
<td>American Council of Teachers of Foreign Languages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CILS</td>
<td>Certificazione di Italiano come Lingua Straniera</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMA</td>
<td>Christian Missionary Alliance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPA</td>
<td>Growing Participant Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ICLL</td>
<td>International Congress on Language Learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAMP</td>
<td>Language Acquisition Made Practical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LAD</td>
<td>Language Acquisition Device</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L1/L2</td>
<td>First(Mother)/Second(Target) Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPD</td>
<td>Ministry Partner Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTI</td>
<td>Mission Training International</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NS</td>
<td>Native Speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NNS</td>
<td>Non-native Speaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIL</td>
<td>Summer Institute of Linguistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SLA</td>
<td>Second Language Acquisition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCT</td>
<td>Sociocultural Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>PILAT</td>
<td>Principles in Language Acquisition Training</td>
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<tr>
<td>TIL</td>
<td>Toronto Institute of Linguistics</td>
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<tr>
<td>TPR</td>
<td>Total Physical Response</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Social, and Cultural Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNHCR</td>
<td>United Nations High Council on Refugees</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZPD</td>
<td>Zone of Proximal Development</td>
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1. INTRODUCTION

When asked what she had learned about herself in the process of learning Hungarian, Amelia (a pseudonym), an English-speaking American in her mid-thirties, being sent to Hungary with a Christian missions and development organization, answered.

I love how they said it in The Growing Participator Approach [A book she had just read, teaching a language learning method]. I was like “listen to this!” like “look this up!” (you know) But like even before I read that, I was just thinking “oh wow!” It really is a unique... (you know) there are people that learn languages, but even like (you know) businessmen and they have (you know) interpreters and translators, like missionaries are REALLY the people that GO::: and a part of their life is (you know) really stepping in to learn the language (you know). And I know there are other professions but I ... I really feel like it’s such a part of our calling... and so in that sense I just ... this is a unique privilege. This is not something that many people (you know) really GET TO DO {emphasized phrase} and what it reflects about (you know) incarnational mission (you know) just the willingness to really (you know) give your life for others, and that may mean looking stupid. I’m like “I GET that ... I GET that!” {crescendo of pitch and volume} and there is a sense of really (you know) a sacred element.

In this extract, Amelia cites the Growing Participator Approach (Thomson 2012), a language learning methodology that her sending organization endorses. She is excited about the approach because it resonates with her own sense of herself as a language learner, a role she relates to her calling, and sees as an honor and privilege- something she is both getting and giving. She assumes that most people never learn a second
language, that hers is a unique, minority experience. This sense of herself as a language learner, her ideas about what it means to learn Hungarian, how to go about learning Hungarian, when to try using Hungarian, is what I refer to as her SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERHOOD.

This dissertation will explore how the second language learnerhood of field workers like Amelia evolves across the trajectories of their association with their sending organization, which I call by the pseudonym Love the World. Amelia goes on to read a passage from the Growing Participating Approach, aligning her own sense of learnerhood with the model espoused by Thomson.

I do definitely see it as um how does it say it? Growing participation? Like, like reflecting like (you know) like it says reflecting the glory of... umm reflecting... (reading aloud from the Growing Participator Approach book) “and so the host people experience the newcomer as a steadily emerging new person. In the process, those host people begin to experience the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ, reflected from the hearts of the newcomers through their faces as they emerge as increasingly full persons before host eyes, sharing the good news. Like other aspects of sociocultural and cognitive development in the newcomers, it’s a process that begins simply and becomes richer over time”.

Amelia grounds her learnerhood in her Christian faith, in sociocultural language learning theory, and in the uniqueness of her kind of migration. The excerpt on page 1 reveals her belief that field workers of faith-based missions and development organizations differ from other professionals or other non-governmental development workers in their commitment to learning the “heart language” of their new host cultures.

Amelia’s language learning project did not in fact play out as she ideally envisioned at her organization’s pre-field orientation program, where the interview was taken. Financial difficulties and family situations delayed her arrival in Hungary by eight months; the pre-field training she received became a vague memory, buried under
the preparations of moving her family to a new country. Although a highly motivated learner, Amelia faced frustrations, conflicting advice about language learning methods, and fewer opportunities to use Hungarian than she had imagined. Due to her duties as a mother and having to help put on an English camp for teenagers, she didn’t even begin language learning until four months after arriving, and her progress in the language was much slower than anticipated. Amelia’s sense of herself as a language learner, i.e. her learnerhood, evolved from her view at the pre-field training, and continues to evolve. The learnerhoods of these American field workers are shaped by several forces: by prevailing and conflicting language ideologies in the missions and development world, by past experiences with language learning and overseas travel, by traditions of language pedagogy at the field sites, by institutional management practices and by the realities of their work conditions and expectations.

1.1 AIM OF THE STUDY AND MAIN FINDINGS

Whereas many second language acquisition studies attempt to objectively assess the communicative proficiency of learners, this is not a study on second language proficiency per se, but rather a study on ideologies of and beliefs about second language, at the individual, organizational, and societal levels. Missions and faith-based development workers comprise an enormous and understudied force positioned along the geographical and cultural “front lines” of the global processes reshaping behavior patterns in late modernity. Language is the primary vehicle through which these learners’ communicate and attempt to realize their goals for the people in their host cultures, whether that be civil society, economic development, post-disaster reconstruction, health and education initiatives, or indeed evangelization. Since this population has great
potential to alter the moral, ideological, and linguistic landscapes at the field sites which receive them, and since language learning plays such a vital role in their ability to both carry out their intended projects, and to listen to and learn from host national populations, a study on the ideologies of second language learning within the missions and development enterprise is essential to understanding both the experiences of Western field workers, and the constraints on and possibilities for impacting the field sites which receive them.

Measuring the actual proficiencies of the host language workers would be very difficult, as these learners are learning a wide variety of host languages, have differential exposure to input, different lengths of stay, different age on arrival, different academic experiences, and aim for very different competencies in their target language. What they all have in common is their shared membership within an organization committed to a particularly Christian ideology of language, and to a sociocultural language pedagogy at odds with both their own academic experiences, and local histories of adult language learning at the field sites. These ideological and pedagogical beliefs constrain the conditions within which the acquisitional mechanisms of input, noticing, interlanguage, output and feedback occur.

This study shows how one Christian missions and development organization, Love the World, attempts to prepare and support its workers for learning the host languages of their field sites. This organization devolves responsibility for developing and enforcing language learning policy to ever-more-local levels within the organization, levels which are reluctant to hold workers accountable to protect short-term morale, and which are disconnected from organizational centers where knowledge of second language
acquisition theory and experience with effective second language pedagogy are collected. As a result learners often get “left to their own devices” when actually carrying out their language learning at the field site, and their trajectories of language learning unfold more slowly and with more difficulty than imagined at their six week pre-field training.

Field workers’ language acquisition experiences are also shaped and overshadowed by two larger ideologies of language learning which interact across the nodes of and individual trajectories through Love the World. One ideology, rooted in academic tradition, developmental second language acquisition and modernist missiological theory, valorizes the individual learner (the locus of abstract knowledge and skills) who seeks to acquire a reified heart language. Such heart language belongs to and defines host nationals living at each field site. Another ideology, rooted in sociocultural pedagogical methods, emphasizes distributed cognition, linguistic repertoires and community participation. Against the backdrop of changing realities of language use which accompany globalization, tensions between these two ideologies of learnerhood affect the success of field workers’ attempts to perform their host language identities and their organizational duties at 13 field sites across Europe.

1.2 GENESIS OF THE STUDY

The idea for this study was borne out of my own six years’ experience living overseas, in a position similar to Amelia’s, teaching English and German at universities affiliated in various ways with the Christian faith. Having personal contact with many individuals who located themselves within the missions and development enterprise, my position as a researcher is what Wong & Canagarajah (2009) refer to as “sympathetic critic”. I aim to adopt the posture towards Love the World which Carr (2010) adopted
towards “Fresh Beginnings”, the human services organization analyzed in her ethnography of addiction, namely charitable toward the relationships and overall goals while analyzing the organizational and contextual issues constraining effective delivery of services.

As a language learner myself, I had many chances to interact with “host nationals”, residents of the country I was staying in, and observe their reactions to the various expatriates who lived among them. As a language teacher, I saw that many young people were very competent English speakers indeed, and more interested in using their English with me than in patiently enduring my highly truncated repertoire of their language’s forms. Yet I heard many host nationals comment on how meaningful it was to meet expatriates who took the time to learn their language, and who demonstrated perseverance, humility and a learner attitude in their interactions. Such learners seemed to controvert prevailing ideologies’ of Americans, gleaned from media or previous experiences, and for those expatriates who attained a degree of host language proficiency surpassing host nationals’ expectations, host nationals seemed more disposed to listen to and consider their messages and projects. Students were receptive to English teachers who had themselves taken the time to learn a new language, and drew insights from the host language into class. This receptivity also seemed to extend to religious missionary activity. I observed host nationals who might otherwise ignore a Muslim, Mormon\(^1\) or evangelical\(^2\) missionary, engage with one precisely because of that missionary’s unexpected proficiency in the host language.

---

\(^1\) The term Mormon is used to refer to members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints.

\(^2\) The term evangelical is used throughout this dissertation to refer to a subset of Protestants, who themselves claim this name. I am not endorsing any particular theological or sociological definition, but apply that term to all who apply it to themselves.
While living overseas I had a “front-row seat” to many of the processes described in this dissertation. I noticed that American expatriates, some of who were self-identified field workers like Amelia, had widely varying ideas on how important it was to learn the language of their host country, since “most everyone speaks English” or they “can get by with English”. Some expatriates were affiliated with organizations that prepared them very well for learning a host language, even providing them opportunities to learn the language before arriving in their new host country. Other expatriates were “left to their own devices” possessing a monolingual naïveté about how difficult learning a language would be, and what costs to pride, time and energy are involved. For those expatriates who were motivated to learn the host language, they employed a wide array of methods, some of which seemed more rooted in folk beliefs about language learning than in what the field of SLA has discovered about adult language acquisition. Just as the cultures I lived in differed in their beliefs about childrearing and healthcare, they also differed in their beliefs about what their language meant to their culture and nation, and what effective language learning looks like.

Another recurring observation was that expatriate field workers consistently underestimated both the difficulty and utility of acquiring host language proficiency. Their initial expectations tended to be unrealistic, and were quickly revised downward as the reality of language learning set in. Such field workers seemed to justify their abandonment of language learning goals by deciding that learning the host language wasn’t all that useful, since “everyone speaks English”. Expatriates often were oblivious to conversations had about them “behind their linguistic back”, in the host language, motivated either by a desire to be secretive or out of simple frustration with expatriates’
linguistic incompetence. Such conversations, had they been understood, would have altered expatriate’s behavior in the host country. Expatriates were also often confronted with situations where English was not in fact “everywhere” and the resulting miscommunication led to misunderstandings and negative evaluation of the host culture.

I also noticed clearly how little of the insights from the field of second language acquisition (SLA) made their way into the practical language learning and language teaching behaviors. There seemed to be significant ideological logjams, keeping insights from SLA from being disseminated to sending organizations, and especially to the individuals who seemed to be the most obvious “consumers” of or “audience” for second language research. These anecdotal observations, gathered from observing host nationals and expatriate language learners, and personal experience learning languages as an expatriate, stirred in me the desire to study these phenomena in a more concerted way.

1.3 THEORETICAL TOOLS USED

The focus and methodology of this study are unorthodox among formal linguistics dissertations, which usually focus on a formal phenomenon, among sociolinguistics dissertations, which seek to correlate formal and social variables, and among applied linguistics dissertations, which usually focus on a particular instructional setting, or a particular variable affecting second language attainment. This dissertation is neither focused on a formal linguistic phenomenon, nor a linguistic variable, neither an instructional setting, nor even a longitudinal case study of learners per se. The central object of analysis of this study is an international organization, and the self-reported language learning practices of individuals as they move their way through the organization on their own trajectories through time and space. The design is thus
ethnography of language acquisition, where an organization, rather than a family, community or individual, provides the “boundaries” of the ethnography.

Second language acquisition theory is appealed to in order to analyze the language learning actions and policies of organization workers, my participants, and the local teachers, tutors and the host nationals my participants interact with. The underlying assumptions of the working language acquisition models of these different actors can be analyzed, and compared with what the field of second language acquisition research has shown about the effectiveness of various types of instruction. Second language acquisition theory is especially relevant as the sociocultural pedagogies which my participants were taught to employ make different assumptions about input, explicit grammar instruction, and the analogy between child and adult language acquisition than the models of foreign language instruction most commonly used in Eastern European settings.

The field of linguistic anthropology has within its purview the analysis of LANGUAGE IDEOLOGIES. As opposed to the work on LANGUAGE ATTITUDES which emerged from Labovian sociolinguistics (Labov 1966, Cooper & Fishman 1974) and work such as Dennis Preston’s (1986), on folk linguistics, linguistic anthropologists have pursued more ethnographically situated work on language ideology (Silverstein 1979, Woolard & Schieffelin 1994, Kroskrity 2004). Ideology is important to understanding learnerhood, as ideologies mediate between individuals' subjective experiences and larger culture-specific systems of thought and meaning-making. As such learnerhood is rooted in anthropological work showing that the formation of subjects is culture-specific, and depends on both social and internal/psychological processes. Such work has focused on
such domains as gender (Morris 1995), classroom education (Wortham 2005) and Christianity (Bialecki, Haynes & Robbins 2009), all of which are relevant to the language learning projects of my participants.

These ideologies of language shape the motives for learning the host language and also the second language identities which they perform in the host language. The fact that my participants' identity in the host language is relevant to their language and language learning behaviors, invokes tools from sociolinguistics. Third-wave sociolinguists (Eckert 2008), have reacted against earlier sociolinguistic work which sees language as reflecting an inherent pre-existing identity. Instead these scholars, teasing out the many different levels at which identity, performances of selves, emerge from ongoing, microgenetic interaction.

Although identities are certainly invoked in the narratives of learnerhood which I analyze, for the purposes of this dissertation, I won't be delving as much into the interactionally-produced identities of individual learners, but rather the patterned production of learnerhood. Thus, while third-wave sociolinguistics focuses on individuals' relatively flexible performances of selves, I aim to address larger, ideological constraints on the kinds of second language identities which my participants desire to inhabit. This dissertation will not therefore analyze case-studies of individuals, but rather a larger culture of learnerhood, rooted in the uniqueness of Love the World's institutional culture, which limits the range of linguistic performances these learners achieve.

Insights from linguistic anthropology are key to understanding socialization into ways of speaking, how language acquisition methods grounded in sociocultural theory appear to match with the organization culture. Linguistic anthropology and
sociolinguistics also share interest in how communicative competence relates to sociocultural theory. If communicative competence must be created and affirmed interactionally (Kataoka et al. 2013) by individuals with a social history, embodying language practices, situated within a given cultural, geographical, and historical moment, then this clearly relates to Cultural Historical Activity Theory in second language learning (Lantolf & Thorne 2007).

Communicative competence involves, interactionally, a field worker creating the impression of expert participation in a society, and being able to nuance and control host nationals' denotational and connotational understandings of field workers' utterances. Anthropologists and sociolinguists have analyzed several components of such competence, including code choice (Ma 2004, Zentella 2009), the semiotic processes entailed in creating indexical orders (Eckert 2008), the interactional emergence of social meaning (Hirst 2003, Eckert 2012), linguistic landscaping (Shohamy & Gorter 2008), polycentricity (Blommaert 2007b), translanguaging (Pennycook 2007) and stylistic repertories (Blommaert 2010), and scalar analyses of linguistic variation (Blommaert 2007a, 2010). These different tools are useful not only to explain these learners’ emergent second-language identity, but also their exposure to comprehensible target language input (forms). In this dissertation, polycentricity and scalar analysis of linguistic variation are especially relevant.

An understanding of formal linguistics is necessary in order to be able to assess the accuracy of utterances, the strength of American accent, the relative difficulty of learning the languages in question, and to identify particular structures which pose a challenge to acquisition (such as vowel harmony, new phonemic contrasts, and fusional morphology).
The formal structure of the language is highly relevant to learners who perform their own folk metalinguistic analyses, and who are exposed to a wide variety of metalinguistic analyses in their textbooks, formal interactions with language instructors, and spontaneous interactions with host nationals.

1.4 Research Questions

A multi-sited and longitudinal study of field workers like Amelia addresses several questions about second language learnerhood, questions which relate to larger discussions in the field of Applied Linguistics. These questions guided the design of this dissertation. Since sending organizations serve as the primary framework for organizing field workers' projects, and equipping them to live in the host culture, it is important to ask the following question:

What role does a transnational organization play in socializing its field workers into a desired model of learnerhood? Does the organization play as dominant a role as it desires, or do other sources of socialization overshadow the role of the organization?

The model of language learning presented to the workers at their pre-field training is rooted in sociocultural theory. These methods of language learning are relatively unexamined in the second language acquisition literature, despite their ideological alignment with how the sociolinguistics of globalization conceives of languages and repertoires. It is thus also important to ask:

How are language learning methods rooted in sociocultural theory (such as the GPA), methods widely admired in the circle of faith-based missions and development organizations but rarely used elsewhere, understood and implemented by the organization and its field workers? What contributes to the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of these methods?
In order to practically apply the findings of the data collected in this dissertation to better help organizations like Love the World equip field workers like Amelia to acquire more authentic and unconstrained host language repertoires, I also sought to answer a third question:

What are the consequences of the model of learnerhood that these field workers have for their perception and reception in the host culture, the success of their projects, their ultimate attainment, their morale and their longevity?

This dissertation addresses those questions by tracking two cohorts of workers from their pre-field orientation through their first years in their field. Along the way, data were also collected by working backwards from the organization, studying centers whose views of learnerhood are influential among faith-based missions and development organizations, and also by working outwards, interviewing the many people with who these field workers interact at their field sites. By following these flows of ideology, these strands of network connection, I aim to describe how learnerhood is embodied within the transnational assemblage of at least one faith-based non-governmental organization.

As stated in Section 1.3, this description of learnerhood appeals to theories from second language acquisition (SLA), sociolinguistics and linguistic anthropology. While being primarily descriptive, this dissertation is also analytic, identifying the contradictions inherent in ideologies of personhood, language, and language acquisition in both Love the World, and the larger missions and development enterprise. These ideologies generate very different outcomes: for workers in different organizations, at different field sites within Love the World, and between different workers at the same field site. Although these outcomes have consequences for the host society, this study will focus on individual learners and on the organization.
1.5 Outline of the Dissertation

Chapter 2 of this dissertation motivates the study, positioning it within the fields of linguistics, sociolinguistics and second language acquisition. The missions and development enterprise is introduced to provide context for the activities of Love the World, and the methodologies for data gathering and analysis are explained. Chapter 3 is devoted to defining second language learnerhood as a construct, relating it to language ideology, work on language socialization and SLA theory. Chapter 4 describes the Christian missions and development assemblage focusing on sociocultural ideologies of language acquisition which emerged from the Toronto Institute of Linguistics (TIL). I then introduce Love the World: its goals, internal structure and language acquisition policies, including the GPA, one methodology which emerged from the TIL. Chapter 5 presents the GPA in detail, its relation to Vygotskian sociocultural theory, its theoretical assumptions about SLA, its pedagogical design, and how Love the World implemented it in 2010-2011.

At this point the dissertation shifts to analysis of data collected from field workers, and their individual learnerhoods as they play out in the context of Love the World and their local field sites. Chapter 6 identifies themes which are common to the learnerhoods of workers across the many nodes of the organization. These themes are then organized in terms of policies and ideologies which relate to different hierarchical levels of the organization in Chapter 7. Chapter 8 analyzes these themes of learnerhood from a chronological and ontogenetic perspective, tracing individuals’ trajectories as they move through the nodes of the organization and their time in field service. Chapter 9 presents two case studies of atypical trajectories in order to highlight some unforeseen
consequences of the organization’s approach to learnerhood. Chapter 9 also includes some practical suggestions for how organizations like Love the World might manage some of the obstacles to ultimate attainment which arise out of organizational stances, policies and expectations. Finally Chapter 10 offers theoretical implications for the relationship between cognitive and sociocultural approaches to learner development in transnational organizations, and highlights interesting directions for future research on second language learnerhood.
2. **BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY**

In this section I will introduce in more detail the population of missions and development workers which forms the participant pool for this study. I then discuss some of the emic terminology within this community which I adopt throughout the study. I next explain my data collection methods, motivating my choice of both Love the World, and the exact set of participants I am focusing on, and present my transcription protocols.

2.1 **THE TERM “MISSIONS AND DEVELOPMENT”**

“Missions and development” is an emic term for a set of organizations based in many regions of the world, which are interested in promoting spiritual and humanitarian programs cross-culturally. The word “development” is a loaded term which has been defined in many different ways. E. Summerson Carr cites Yeheskel Hasenfeld’s (1992) work to argue that “human service organizations, as people processing entities, are characterized by ambiguous, if highly ideological, goals. Taking human beings as their “raw material” such organizations invest the persons being processed with available cultural values and social identities so as to create “reference points” in coping with the moral components of decision making” (Carr 2010:34). This characterization is especially relevant to missions and development organizations; Love the World aims to equip host nationals with explicitly Christian “reference points” to guide their decision making, a highly ideological goal, albeit ambiguously presented to host nationals.
2.1.1 Missions and development workers

Missions and development agencies are important players which form an international assemblage engaged in creating new ethical regimes (Ong & Collier 2006). John Martinussen (1997:37) describes development as “a process whereby the real per-capita income of a country increases over a long period of time while simultaneously poverty is reduced and the inequality in society is generally diminished”. This ideal goal is not always realized, and James Ferguson (1990) showed how “the development machine” can actually increase inequality. Within the assemblage of evangelical non-governmental organizations, “development” seems to not primarily mean this effort to increase per-capita income and reduce inequality. When “missions and development” is used within this assemblage, the term “missions” seems to encompass activities which promote spiritual growth and maturity, while “development” refers to humanitarian projects (such as caring for refugees, disaster victims, orphans, individuals deprived of medical care) rather than economic empowerment projects which are often the focus of work critical of “development” (Gardner & Lewis 1996). “Development” as an emic term might correspond more accurately to “relief”, and yet the term “development” may index a condescending stance, that host cultures are still “developing”.

Geographically, missions and development workers have always flocked to those areas that are newly “opened” to movement of personnel and media, “opened” by the creation of new routes such as to the American West or Inland Africa as roads and railroads were built in the 19th century, or by removal of political barriers such as to the formerly closed areas of Communist Europe or China in the 1990’s. Missions and development workers are one of the first groups of cross-cultural migrants to take
advantage of these “openings” and are one of the first that local populations come in contact with. As such they have outsized potential in shaping local populations’ views about Westerners, foreigners in general, and the costs and benefits of increased interdependence with other countries. Arjun Appadurai conceives of globalization in terms of flows: “We are functioning in a world fundamentally characterized by objects in motion. These objects include ideas and ideologies, people and goods, images and messages, technologies and techniques. This is a world of flows” (2001:5). Missions and development organizations serve as such a conduit for symbolic resources, and are often explicitly established to facilitate the flow of ideological symbolic capital such as knowledge about agriculture, health, pedagogical methods, and religious beliefs.

Where flows of material resources are involved, such as aiding refugees or rebuilding after natural disasters, most missions and development organizations do not seek to deliver a financial return to Western shareholders. Development organizations that focus on relief and education for example, disburse money raised in the West to those who are judged to “need” it, and stand little chance of repaying investors, unless it were morally, not economically. Eric Hobsbawm notes one maxim about globalization: “those who feel [globalization] most benefit from it the least” (2007:3). To the extent that this is true, these missions and development agencies are usually established to directly counteract this maxim. Seeing globalization as an inevitable process, many of these organizations have the explicit goal of mitigating any harmful effects of globalization as much as possible, and seeing that those who stand to “benefit from it the least” do get connected to resources, ideological and economic, that may level the playing field. Well-known examples of such organizations are International Justice Mission, the Heifer
The number of trans-national migrants who are engaged in these activities is difficult to calculate. Where they exist, statistics can include all individuals who migrate with a religious motivation, including: Muslim missionaries, Catholic religious orders, groups regarded by Protestants and Catholics as only marginally Christian (Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses), Protestant denominational workers, and Protestants in parachurch or missions and development organizations. Some statistics count only those working in the non-Western or non-Christian world, and other statistics focus only on those doing explicitly religious work, excluding relief, humanitarian, and faith-motivated civil society workers. The Center for Global Christianity, at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary provides figures for 2001 which attempt to take these distinctions into account.

**Table 2.1: Number of Protestant workers in the world (from Barrett & Johnson 2002)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of field site</th>
<th>Number of “missionaries”, individuals whose primary goal is evangelization. (Expatriates only)</th>
<th>Number of “Christian workers”, individuals of Christian faith who have other development goals. (Includes both expatriates and host nationals)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unevangelized World (countries where there is little Christian presence)</td>
<td>10,200 foreign missionaries</td>
<td>20,500 Christian workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evangelized non-Christian world (countries where Christianity is not the dominant religion, but where there is a significant Christian presence)</td>
<td>103,000 foreign missionaries</td>
<td>1.31 million Christian workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian World (countries where Christianity is the dominant religion)</td>
<td>306,000 foreign missionaries</td>
<td>4.19 million Christian workers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to these workers, there are numerous Islamic missionaries, engaged in *da’wah* (invitation) of various forms, over 50,000 Mormon missionaries worldwide.
(www.lds.org), and many lay and ordained Catholic cross-cultural field workers. Even though the exact number of faith-based missions and development workers is difficult to calculate, it is almost certainly fewer than three groups which comprise the most significant population movements in the age of globalization. These groups are international students, numbering about 2.5 million in 2009 (UNESCO, World Conference on Higher Education, 2009), refugees, numbering 15.1 million in 2011 (United Nations High Council on Refugees), and economic migrants, numbering over 200 million in 2006 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division 2009).

2.1.2 Missions and development in globalization

Suresh Canagarajah defines globalization as a state of “porous national boundaries across which people, goods, and ideas flow” which allows “people to shuttle rapidly between communities and communicative contexts” (2006b:25). Historically, missions and development workers are a significant and understudied population, whose past and present activity engendered “flow of ideas” and involved “shuttling rapidly between communities”, long before late modernity, when such phenomena became normal or came to characterize the Western perception of the world. A unique set of migrants, missionaries were one of the first large groups of Westerners to experience the phenomena now referred to as “globalization”. Hobsbawm states that while the “scale of globalization is modest, [its] political and cultural impact are disproportionately large” (2007:4). This observation applies well to the missions and development enterprise.

I use “globalization” to refer to geocultural, not geopolitical phenomena (see Blommaert 2010:13 for a more detailed distinction). Despite some claims that
globalization has made the world a “village”, in that cultures have become homogenized and geographical distance matters less in determining intensity of contact, Blommaert counters that “the world is not a village, but a network of villages” (2010:23). Each global process or ideology has to be instantiated at the local level; while there is influence from the global, the local is quite resilient as well. Global influences become part of the production of locality, how local communities construct a social, cultural, political, and economic environment (Appadurai 1996:187). Missionaries and development workers are highly involved in bringing global ideological resources to bear in new productions of locality, and new ideological frames of behaving at the local level.

Compared to international students, refugees, and economic migrants, relatively little attention has been paid to missionary and development workers as a contemporary expression of migration. The vast majority of academic work on missions and missionaries focuses on the past consequences of these actors, and their co-involvement in colonial enterprises (see Comaroff & Comaroff 1986, Pels 1997, Masagara 2001, Samuels 2006, Gilmour 2007, Taiwo 2010, Montero 2012, Frykenberg 2013 for representative works). Especially in the fields of linguistics and anthropology, works mentioning missionaries focus either on records of past activities, or assume a more modernist twentieth century view of missions, wherein educated Westerners travel to a locale in the global South to work with primarily rural, tribal or indigenous, and non-literate populations. This may indeed have been the typical model of missionary activity in the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries, but the model is changing quickly in the age of globalization (Pocock, Van Rheenen & McConnell 2005, Bosch 2011).
In the following chart I attempt to synthesize some of the tensions between these two approaches to missions, as the field gradually adopts more “trans approaches” (Pennycook 2007). The missions/development enterprise is increasingly aimed at transnational, mobile, (multi-/trans-)linguistic populations, and the traditional model of the “static missionized subject” no longer accurately typifies the missions enterprise. In the 21st century missions and development workers are more likely to be sent to Mexico City, Hyderabad or Yokohama than to the New Guinea highlands or the Amazon basin.

Another hallmark of globalization is the emergence of “hyper-central” and “super-central” languages (DeSwaan 2001), what Kamiyoshi Kataoka calls the “rising importance of global languages such as Spanish, French and English in re-shaping language, communicative styles and ideologies of language” (Kataoka et al. 2013:2).

Table 2.2 below synthesizes insights from the sources mentioned above, and those gained during presentations and conversations at the International Congress on Language Learning, a triennial gathering of leading players in language learning in faith-based missions and development organizations.

**TABLE 2.2: Comparison of Modernist and Post-modernist missiological assumptions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Traditional conception of missions: 19th-early 20th c.</th>
<th>Missions in the age of globalization: 21st c.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Length of stay</strong></td>
<td>10 years to life: Acculturate to host culture</td>
<td>3-5 years: Social media and resource networks allow “keeping a foot in both worlds”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Team make-up</strong></td>
<td>Almost entirely Westerners</td>
<td>Not just Westerners, often Latin Americans, Koreans, Albanians (in Eastern Europe)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Target population</strong></td>
<td>Rural, indigenous, speakers of non-literate languages</td>
<td>Urban, mobile, educated, speak literary languages that already have Bible and other Christian materials available.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Assumptions about language</strong></td>
<td>People are assigned to tribe-like “people groups” seen as speakers of “languages” as bounded entities (cf. Hymes 1984)</td>
<td>People are seen as being in social networks, which can be multi- or trans-ethnic “superdiversity” Blommaert (2010:6), using forms from many “repertoires”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Primary tasks</strong></td>
<td>Bible translation, evangelism, church planting, setting up schools and hospitals</td>
<td>Equipping local Christian leaders, social justice initiatives, starting socially entrepreneurial businesses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Academic works analyzing the missions and development workforce through the lens of globalization exist (Lausanne Occasional Paper 2004, Park 2008, Wan 2012, Thompson 2012) but are few in number. Many of the critiques of mission activity (such as Comaroff & Comaroff 1986) assume a model of missions towards rural, indigenous populations (such indigeneity is problematized by Gegeo 2001). Joel Robbins notes that much of the anthropological critique of past missionary endeavors is rooted in what he calls “continuity thinking”, whereby maintenance of the spiritual and economic status quo is seen as inherently valuable and the primary aim when dealing with indigenous populations. Mission activity inherently imposes a stark discontinuity, which is embodied in the discourses of Christian conversion, and which is seen in the changes to the spiritual and even economic structure of communities impacted by missions work. This sort of “discontinuity” is argued by Robbins (2007) not to be an inherently negative thing. Field workers “move into a space which is not empty, the spaces are always someone’s space, and they are filled with norms, expectations, and conceptions of what counts as proper and normal (indexical) language use, and what does not count as such” (Blommaert 2010:6). Although there is a pre-existing status quo when a field worker arrives, discontinuity necessarily occurs, as new norms, expectations, and conceptions of proper and normal are introduced.

Work in the field of sociolinguistics of globalization is in fact interested in precisely these kinds of discontinuities - language behaviors, in ideologies, in semiotic resources and repertoires which arise from culture contact. For Jan Blommaert, the global level of analysis requires a “move from languages to language varieties and repertoires... it is not abstract language that is globalized”, but rather “specific speech forms, genres,
styles, and forms of literacy practice” (2003:608). In the sociolinguistics of globalization framework, users are depicted as enacting a range of identities by deploying forms from a variety of repertoires available to them. These repertoires may originate in different “languages” or may combine forms with various origins into a single repertoire. No pianist knows every song written for piano, and no speaker is capable of performing all the possible social actions that a language potentially offers. Every speaker, both native and non-native then, is a speaker of a “truncated repertoire” (Blommaert 2010); no one person's repertoire is ever "complete". Some repertoires are more truncated than others, such as a tourist saying “water.... want”, launching isolated English forms into a communicative encounter hoping that gesture and situational context may fill in what the tourist’s truncated repertoire cannot convey. As an object of analysis, “languages” then are less useful than “languagings”, deploying semiotic forms which both presuppose and produce indexical meanings.

Sociolinguistics of globalization is a useful approach for studying the contemporary missions enterprise in that it explicitly theorizes the increased intensity of superdiversity (Vertovec 2007), trans-local phenomena, and discontinuity found within the larger urban centers hosting missionaries in the 21st century. Brian, a field worker in Sweden, met a female student while he was in a university cafeteria in Stockholm, seeking to connect some students interested in Christianity. The young woman, upon hearing him explain in Swedish that he was a Christian who actually believed in Christian teachings, looked at him “as if meeting someone who thought the world was flat” (Brian’s words). She said to him, in fluent English, “I knew people like you (meaning Christians) existed, I was just not sure that I’d ever meet one”. This kind of encounter is
far from the traditional images of missions as a colonial enterprise. The woman was highly educated, in a very-developed country, multi-lingual, and in a seemingly post-Christian environment. New kinds of discontinuities are created in such encounters, as are new ideologies of what it means to speak English, to move across borders, and to be a Christian.

Field workers have a deep stake in learning languages other than English, as the “gospel” cannot be shared without acquiring both the formal grammar and vocabulary to communicate ideas, as well as the pragmatic and sociocultural practices which legitimize the workers’ voice in the host culture (Gilmour 2007, Son 2002, Ikeda 2008, Kramsch 2006). These workers must balance multiple tasks: first, to meet the organization’s standards for being a speaker of the host language (Stonefield 1995, Schwarz 2003, Ikeda 2008), second, to become a legitimate speaker from the host culture’s perspective of the new language (Riley 2006), and third, to maintain their “native” identity when communicating with supporting bodies and sending agencies (Clement & Beauregard 1986). This is a balancing act fraught with tension (Ariza 2004, Armour 2009). Further complicating the situation, those who shape the language learning and use policies within these organizations are often neither trained in language acquisition, nor experienced language learners, and may never have worked in the field.

Another gap that this study seeks to fill is an analysis of how ideas flow throughout these large international organizations. Jan Blommaert writes:

[Globalization] forces us to think about phenomena as located in and distributed across different scales, from the local to the global, and to examine the connections between these various levels in ways that do not reduce phenomena or events to their strict context of occurrence (Blommaert 2010:1)
Blommaert’s framework moves beyond well-established sociolinguistic concepts like intertextuality and recontextualization by taking into account geographical scale and the spatial situatedness of circulating interpretive frames and indexical systems. These organizations are represented by offices at many different scales, the city, national, regional and global level. Certain projects transcend these scales, and are affected by policy decisions made at several different sites and several levels of the organization. Semiotic resources and indexical systems flow geographically, via migration and electronic communication across different locales, and between the different scales. This study seeks to track how ideologies about just one aspect of field workers’ lives, language learning, flow and are transformed within a trans-national organization.

2.2 TERMINOLOGICAL CLARITY

In describing the assemblage, I will be relying on emic terminology, on my participants’ own ways of talking about the organization and themselves. It is worth clarifying these terms and motivating my terminological decisions.

2.2.1. “Field worker” vs. “missionary”

The most obvious decision is the choice of the term “field worker” rather than “missionary”. Sjaak van der Geest (1990) and Joel Robbins (2007) both elaborate the history of unease in the anthropological community toward the missions enterprise, that is the collective efforts by Christian organizations and individuals to move to another culture with the express purpose of exposing populations at new sites to Christian teachings. Both van der Geest and Robbins cite the long-running tradition in anthropology which associates missionary enterprises with the parallel enterprises of colonization and the spread of capitalism. As many kinds of resources, economic,
political and spiritual, were imported by colonial powers and distributed to their colonies throughout the 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} centuries (with various degrees of adoption and friction (Tsing 2005)), these processes of resource movement became entangled. This entanglement led to an understandable, but oversimplified equation of missions work with colonialism, when in fact, according to van der Geest, missionaries often acted to mitigate the processes of colonialism, and at times even operated in direct opposition to the economic and political aspects of contact with Western powers. He goes so far as to claim that they “have made more progress in the decolonialization of the profession” (van der Geest 1990: 594) than anthropologists have. Robert Woodberry (2004) demonstrated that non-state missionaries had a moderating effect on colonial abuses. There is potential for Protestant missionaries to have a similar effect on globalization processes, playing again the “unique bridging role” they played within colonialism (Woodberry 2004:iv), associated with yet ideologically aligned against the neo-liberal aspects of globalization. Van der Geest also argues that missionaries and anthropologists are more alike than either feel comfortable with, both guests in a foreign culture, who share a common destiny, “more pleased with each others’ company than they admit in their writings” (1990:589).

Nevertheless, in a broader American context the cultural indexicalization of “missionary” has changed from being seen as generally performing a positive function (in the 19th century), to performing a negative one. Elisa Ikeda comments that “by observers within and without, Christian missionization has frequently been associated with ‘paternalistic relationships’ and ‘cultural imperialism.’ As the post-colonial world grows more reflective, many missionary organizations grapple to remove residual colonial
orientations in the way that they work with and among others” (Ikeda 2008:1). This shift in perception is ironically paralleled by ongoing shifts in the mission enterprise from mostly evangelistic work among post-colonized, rural or pre-literate populations, to mostly project-based work, partnering with local Christians in diverse, urban, and variously literate settings. As such, the preferred emic term for referring to missionaries within that assemblage is “field workers”. The specific role that many of my participants occupy as field workers is called “International Staff”, and this is how medium-long term field workers are identified in their intra-organization discourse.

A clear indication of this shift is found in the fact that the main conference for players in the field of language learning among missions and development workers changed its name from the International Congress on Missionary Language Learning to the International Congress on Language Learning. In doing fieldwork at this conference in 2010, it was noteworthy that the term “missionary” was consciously avoided in the discourse, although this may have been primarily for security reasons. Attendees from the Middle East may have had their projects jeopardized if they were expressly linked to missionary activity. Nevertheless, many participants were involved in the kind of evangelistic or church planting work that is at the core of popular conceptions of “missions”.

Many of these field workers’ financial supporters and churches still prefer to use the word “missionary” however, and my participants all seem to actively claim the identity of missionary in situations where financial support is at stake. In one excerpt of a letter to financial supporters, Eric writes, “[A potential supporter] began to tell me that the Lord wanted him to support a missionary family that was going overseas with young
children. [He then said] ‘I would like to take care of the remaining 250$ of monthly support.’” In this case identification with the term “missionary” brought a financial reward, but most often these participants resist that term, and its associations. An example of intra-organization use of the word “missionary” is in a letter from the man in charge of language policy for Eastern Europe; “For missionaries, who are trying to do ministry or work on spiritual vocabulary in addition to this, class can seem like a real test of faith or waste of time”. The same document noted that Love the World field workers compare themselves to “missionary biographies”, biographies which skip over the difficult language learning phases at the beginning of these “heroes’” field stays. In order for these learners to be discouraged by comparing themselves to the “missionaries” of the past, they must to some extent identify with those missionaries. This tendency may be more true of American missionaries than those who originate from East Asia or Latin America, according to the personal observations of Steve Sweatman, MTI directory, and of Mary, the Love the World staff member most in charge of language acquisition training, and who also trains South Korean staff.

When speaking in a way which unifies all faith-based missions and development workers, covering the spectrum from evangelists to church planters to teachers or civil society workers, the term “field worker” is often shortened to “worker”. Especially in areas that are sensitive to the presence of foreign Christians, “worker” is the preferred term, although “M” short for “missionary” is also used in personal correspondence and incidental commentary which may be overheard, indexing that there is a connection between “worker” and “missionary”. This connection is not completely lost on the local
people living at their field sites. Rahman, a Serbo-Croatian speaker, notes that “we know they’re here on a mission, even though they try to hide it”. The most visible “missionaries” in the Eastern European media, and in local imaginations belong to groups such as Mormons and Jehovah’s Witnesses, which are identified as dangerous “cults” in local discourse (based on three years of living and working in this region), and as pseudo-Christian by the field workers in my study. The potential for confusion with these groups gives Protestant field workers have an even greater incentive to avoid this term. The choice of “field worker” also foregrounds the commonalities that those involved in expressly Christian projects have with a wide range of other migrants at each field site, who are also involved in project-based work, usually in partnership with local individuals or organizations.

2.2.2 “Host language” vs. “Target language”

“Target language” emerged as an alternative formulation to second language in the 1960’s and 1970’s as a way to bypass the problems with the term “second language”, and to imply directionality, intention and motivation on the part of language learners. Within the assembly I am studying though, the term which is preferred is “host language”. “Host language” has long been used as a technical term in computational linguistics and computer programming, with servers or computers “hosting” other programs. The origin of “host language” as it refers to language learning seems to be in the approaches which descended from the Toronto Institute of Linguistics, which will be discussed in Section 3.5. The term “host language” figures prominently for example in the Growing

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1 Serbo-Croatian is a linguistic entity, but no longer a culture one since the breakup of Yugoslavia. Most of its speakers claim to speak Bosnian, Serbian or Croatian. I use Serbo-Croatian to refer to the language, and Bosnian to refer to the nationality. Field workers use the term Bosnian for the language as well.
Participator Approach (Thomson 2007, Lomen 2007). These approaches assume field-based learning, rather than classroom-based foreign language learning, thus language learners truly are “guests” in a new country which is “hosting” them.

David Smith (2000, 2009) overtly relates language learning to hospitality, and advocates for even classroom learners to conceive of themselves as potential “guests” in the “host language culture”, as well as “hosts” in their own country for “guests” who speak classroom learners’ target language as a native language. “Host language”, influenced by the GPA, is the term used at the pre-field language acquisition training for Love the World. Mary, the trainer, makes statements such as “expressing ourselves in the host language” and “the ability to talk develops mainly through our efforts to express ourselves in our own words in the host language”. “Host language” as a term speaks to the anxiety over colonial resonances of the missions and development enterprise (Ikeda 2008). By positioning learners as guests, the organization’s choice to use this term foregrounds their roles as learners and listeners, not speakers and doers. I will adopt this usage of “host language”, when making generalizations about language learning as applied to many different situations. My participants however almost never use the word “host language”. This may be evidence that the organization has failed to socialize learners into conceiving of themselves as guests. I suspect however, that the real reason is that learners rarely need to refer to language learning in general, and encounter language learning primarily in terms of one specific language; rather than say “learning the host language”, “learning Italian” (or Slovak, Swedish, etc..) suffices.
2.2.3 “Host national” vs. “the locals”

When referring in a general way to speakers of the target language, the Growing Participator Approach uses the term “host national”. This is an interesting choice on several accounts. First, the term parallels the “guest” and “host” positioning, ceding power to the target language speakers, and foregrounding the neediness of the target language learners. The second implication is scalar in nature. While “the locals” is the term used in much missiological work for the targets of missionization (Zachs 2001, Michaud 2004 and Johns 2011 are works which illustrate this usage), it reflects a 19th century view of missions as targeting rural or “isolated” villages. In this conceptualization, the missionized populations were local in scope, consisting of movements among a few villages, and speak a language with fewer than 100,000 speakers. This kind of missions work is still being done of course (SIL and Wycliffe Bible translators still consciously seek to engage these populations), but missions work has largely shifted to target cities such as Hyderabad, Karachi and Mexico City (Greenway & Monsma 2000, Greenway & Manshau 2007). Cities encapsulate many scales of organization simultaneously, and as nodes of migration and globalization transcend not only the local, but even the national scales. The urbanized “objects” of mission activity are no longer “locals”, but often see themselves as citizens of nation-states, and likely to live lives organized on scales beyond the local.

The choice of “national” as a term has been predominant in missions for several decades seemingly an extension from the diplomatic term “foreign nationals” as applied to Westerners (having a national citizenship and consciousness) living in non-Western countries. “Nationals” as used in such training courses as Perspectives on the World
Christian Movement (Winter and Hawthorne 1992), positions people as the “subject” of a vibrant national life, rather than as the “object” of western missionary activity. “National” is problematic however in that it foregrounds “national languages” like Slovene, or Italian (which are indeed the target languages for my participants) over local languages like Sorbian or minority languages such as Hungarian in Croatia, and indeed transnational languages like English. “National” also erases the very “transnational” spaces (i.e. the European Union, “Europe”, “the West”, “the global North”) that many participants now inhabit, and the ways that indexical values emerge from media practices and conversations that circulate beyond national borders. Certainly the “host nationals” in this study aspire to and in many cases already live globally-scaled, transnational lives.

The conception of “host nationals” as monolinguals, tied to one place, is rooted in the pervasive “people group” approach to missiology which rose in the early 1980s (Winter & Hawthorne 1992). This approach has since dominated missions discourse despite critiques such as those of Wayne McClintock (1988) or Dell Hymes (1984) of dividing humanity into “tribes” based on linguistic behavior. Despite these problems, I will use the emic term “host nationals” when referring to the long-standing residents of the field sites my participants are living in, and who speak the target language my participants are learning.

2.3 METHODOLOGY

To arrive at a picture of how language beliefs are created, reproduced, and transformed throughout an organization and how they are enacted as linguistic behavior in the field, I used a variety of methods. I adopt Garrett’s (2006) articulation of the criteria for language socialization research; longitudinal research design, field-based
collection and analysis, holistic ethnographic perspective, and attention to both micro- and macro-levels of analysis. Such a multi-sited ethnographic approach is the best way to study the organization. I attended training conferences and pre-field language acquisition orientations, visited sub-contracted organizations which produce pedagogical materials and the international and regional headquarters (sites of policy-making), as well as stayed in the individual host-culture sites which receive teams of these field workers. All perform key roles in language socialization and language practices along the frontiers of culture contact.

2.3.1 Love the World as a research site

In searching for an organization to partner with in this study, Love the World was attractive for several reasons. First, unlike organizations such as Wycliffe Bible Translators, language is not an explicit goal of Love the World’s work. Treatments of missionaries in applied linguistics studies often focus on organizations that make analyzing and translating the Bible into unwritten languages a priority. I wanted to work with an organization for which language was incidental to the organizations’ goals, as there would be more opportunity for folk ideologies to emerge.

Second, although Love the World is one of the largest sending organizations in the world, and well-known in evangelical circles, it has a reputation among other organizations for employing field workers who struggle with language acquisition, and who choose to work primarily in English. This reliance on English is partly due to their work with academic populations, but is a fact freely admitted by many people even within the organization who have spent time overseas, and is commented on by workers within other similar organizations. David, a former field worker member in Germany said,
based on his work for the organization in several countries, “Love the World is probably the worst at language learning. They just care if you’re trying”.

Third, their sheer size and scope makes Love the World one of the most influential organizations in the assemblages of world evangelicalism. It is well-placed to shape perspectives of American missions and development workers - what they sound like, what they do, and how they act. Love the World has a presence in over 180 countries, and has over 20,000 field workers serving all over the world. Their workers are often on the front lines of globalization, being the first Americans with who host nationals have had a significant face-to-face relationship, instantiating and complicating host nationals’ own perceptions of Americans and of Christianity in a larger sense, perceptions often gained via American media.

The final factor in choosing Love the World is some personal connections in the organization. Most field workers first make contact with the organization while student members of local university-based chapters in the United States. While I was not involved in a local chapter, I had friends who were, and have known about this organization for over fifteen years. Several of my college friends became field workers within the organization, and they proved invaluable in making the introductions that facilitated this study. At their invitation, I also attended a global conference Love the World organized in 2007. This conference brought together field workers and students from all over the world. The ways that English was used as a lingua franca, the constant official and unofficial interpretation going on, and the vision cast to these students all intrigued me to learn how this organization managed multilingual practices across such a large organization.
2.3.2 Eastern Europe as a research site

Because Love the World is so large, I had to narrow focus in order to do any kind of in-depth analysis. The organization is divided into regions, and I chose the Eastern European region for several reasons. First is my familiarity with several languages of Eastern Europe. Having studied Russian for four years, and having lived in the former Soviet Union, my knowledge of Russian was good enough to assist in comprehending South and West Slavic languages. I felt that the cultural insights I had gained from living for three years in Lithuania, and travelling extensively in the region would provide me at least some depth in analyzing data collected across different field sites in that region.

Second, the languages of Eastern Europe overtly mark a wide array of morphological categories, often using fusional affixation, consonant lenition, vowel suppletion, with a high degree of irregularity in the morphonology and morphosyntax. Eastern European languages thus pose significant challenges to English speakers. The second language acquisition of fusional morphology in particular has proved to be a tricky problem (Brooks et al 2006, Dąbrowska 2001). These structures are difficult to acquire using pedagogical methodologies which link “words” to a single object or action acting as a mnemonic device. Resorting to explicit metalinguistic instruction, a kind of instruction which Love the World does not endorse, is often seen as necessary when teaching these structures.

A third factor is that the English proficiency in Eastern Europe is relatively high, especially among students. I wanted to study a region where English is widely used, because this explicitly complicates traditional assumptions that missions and development activity targets rural, geographically isolated people who lack both
education and symbolic capital with supra-national currency. The English language industry is one of the main ways that Eastern Europe has experienced globalization phenomena, so it is interesting to see how American field workers might intersect with preexisting ideologies about English usage.

Because some of the projects that Love the World is engaged in are of a sensitive nature in certain countries, security is an organizational concern. Because of this, the name of the organization, all the names of organizational roles and programs, the persons who are mentioned in this dissertation, and some of the countries themselves are given pseudonyms. Countries W, X, Y, and Z refer to secure countries where I was initially allowed to gather data in 2010. That data was useable only if I agreed to leave the countries unnamed. Because Love the World was still concerned about security, I collected no further data from Countries W-Z. While that early data was still useful in shaping my picture of learnerhood within Love the World, I replaced the field sites I abandoned with three additional field sites in Western Europe where I had already been gathering data as a back-up plan, knowing that I might lose access to the more sensitive field sites. Appendix A contains a list of the countries and participants from which I was able to gather data and a list of informants. I decided to not gather data from Love the World operations located in the countries of Eastern Europe not listed there, since these operations were not taking on any new field workers from the United States.

2.3.3 Selecting participants

The participants in this study fall into five categories, as illustrated in Table 2.3.
The first category is composed of people who were friends and acquaintances of mine before beginning the study. As I mentioned in the previous section, I had several friends serving as long-term field workers with the organization in other countries, a role I refer to as International Staff (IS). I gathered initial data from these participants as I had already established trust with them, and our pre-existing friendship allowed them to more freely express their feelings and fears with me than with a previously unknown researcher. Because I had context on their backgrounds and motives for choosing to become field workers, I was able to generate hypothesis and hone my research questions during a preliminary field visit to those friends in the Summer of 2010. In this pilot visit, I interviewed this set of participants about their own experiences with language learning prior to joining and once affiliated with Love the World, documented their language use, daily interactions and instructional materials, and met their teammates and host national acquaintances. These interviews and field observations formed the basis of my study design, and helped me identify questions to ask, issues to address, and which nodes in the organization were most relevant.

Two more categories of participants resulted from observing at the pre-field orientation session, called StepOut, held for six weeks each summer. At StepOut in 2010

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category 1</th>
<th>Category 2</th>
<th>Category 3</th>
<th>Category 4</th>
<th>Category 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>When/where I met them</td>
<td>Before starting study</td>
<td>StepOut training 2010/2011</td>
<td>StepOut training 2010/2011</td>
<td>ICLL conference, various locations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Where data was collected</td>
<td>Field visits and interviews 2010</td>
<td>Only interviewed at StepOut</td>
<td>Interview at StepOut, Skype, and field visits</td>
<td>2010 ICLL conference, 2011 PILAT training</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
and 2011, I was introduced to the participants as a doctoral student interested in language learning, and participants who were headed to Europe were asked if they would voluntarily seek me out or sign up for an interview. Through those people who did contact me, I was also able to secure interview times with other workers who were headed to Europe. I was unable to interview some participants headed to Europe due to the timing of my visit to StepOut, or their situation with childcare. Within the set of StepOut participants I have two categories of informants- one group who I was able to interview at StepOut, follow-up with via Skype (an internet calling program), and visit out in the field, and another group who I interviewed at StepOut, but who either never made it to the field, or who left the field to return to the United States before I could do a follow-up interview or field visit.

A fourth group is composed of professionals who work in the area of missionary language acquisition training and support. Mary is a Love the World field worker seen as the expert on language acquisition training. She had previously served as an IS in Latin America, learning Spanish using sociocultural methods, and has been running the language portion of the pre-field training for over a decade, holding a Master’s degree in Teaching Teachers of ESL. Through conversations with her and through her introductions, I was introduced to a network of people who have similar roles in comparable organizations, and who organize conferences designed to connect missions and development organizations with best practices from the academic fields of language pedagogy and field-based adult language acquisition.

A fifth group of informants are people who I first met and was able to interview at the various field sites. When I was doing field visits of field workers who I met at
StepOut, I met their teammates, Sprinters (“Sprint” is a one-two year internship done before joining International Staff), national and regional directors, tutors, instructors, and host nationals involved with StepOut. Interviews with these people gave me a much richer and deeper picture of the situation field workers face. By interviewing Sprinters, I was able to compare direct observations and current snapshots of learnerhood with International Staff’s recollections of their own experiences in the Sprint internship.

2.3.4 Background on the participants

In any study which purports to link language behavior to social roles and identity, it is essential to provide as much demographic and ethnographic background on the participants. Within the sociocultural framework espoused by the Growing Participator Approach (Thomson 2006), the starting identities are also relevant to predicting how the process of apprenticeship and re-acculturation will proceed. The following demographic information reflects both personal observations of the populations involved at StepOut 2010, 2011 and 2013, as well as characterizations provided to me by long-term Love the World staff interviewed at StepOut 2013.

The participants in this study, while accurately representing the range of people who become Love the World staff in Europe, reflect the biases of both the organization Love the World, and of those who self-select to serve in the European context. As noted earlier, Love the World recruits workers primarily from its chapters at local universities throughout America. In order to serve as a Sprinter (short-term worker) or International Staff, a candidate must have completed a bachelor's degree. Since Love the World is not very active at overtly Christian universities, its staff overwhelmingly attended large public universities. Candidates are split roughly evenly between those who identified
with evangelical Christianity as a result of their upbringing, and those for whom this identity became relevant only after attending university and getting involved with a local chapter of Love the World.

Racially, the population of students involved in local chapters roughly reflects the racial make-up of the universities at which they are housed. The populations of those who choose to do a Sprint or join International Staff are a subset of this larger population however, a subset which skews heavily white. Minorities are underrepresented in Love the World's international initiatives originating in the United States. However International Staff are sent out in large numbers from East Asia and Latin America, so there is more diversity in the total number of International Staff than in that set which originates in America. Many Love the World staff note that the racial identities of prospective International Staff tend to correlate with the areas of the world they choose to serve in. More Asian Americans desire to serve in East Asia than in other regions, and a larger share of African Americans serve in Africa and the Caribbean than in other regions. This pattern may be due to new staff's perceived ease of assimilating into the new environment due to shared phenotype, or in some cases heritage links. Whatever the reason, the population headed to Europe is almost entirely self-identifying as Caucasian.

These categories are relevant because they potentially shape participants' views of multilingualism and language learning. Since my participants are all White, all from monolingual English speaking homes, all have college degrees, and are disproportionately from middle-class suburban homes, they are likely to associate language learning with privilege. In such settings in the United States, multilingualism is seen as something acquired late in life, in a classroom setting, connected to tourism,
literature and cultural refinement. Such learners may be less conscious of the fact that for many Americans multilingualism is something experienced from early childhood, and is more associated with social marginalization, lower academic achievement, and ethnic enclaves. It may not be surprising, given the backgrounds of my participants, that they view multilingualism as additive and optional, a "bonus" which altruistically bestows a gift on the speakers of the target language, and is best done through controlled classroom settings.

2.3.5 Using narrative data

In any study involving elicited narratives, it is important to recognize that narratives are not pre-existing accounts of reality, already situated in the mind of the narrator, and just waiting for the occasion to burst forth (French 2009, Mannheim & VanVleet 2002, Wortham 2007). Rather, as Wortham points out, narratives are always situated (i.e. rooted in a real world context of time, space, and power/identity dynamics), emergent (constantly being tailored, subject to ever-evolving interpretive frames). Narrators use language both to represent the self and to enact “a characteristic type of self, and through such performances they can become that type of self” (Wortham 2000:157). Wortham also offers summaries of research on selves in narration: the stable psychological self (Hart & Damon 1988), the narrated autobiographical self (Freeman 1993, Ochs & Capps 2009), the self as social construction in dialogue (Gergen 1989), and ritualized enacted selves (Silverstein & Urban 1996).

Narrators position themselves with respect to their audiences, the characters in their narratives, and importantly to a superaddressee composed of ‘people like the interviewer’ (Wortham 2001). In my analysis of interview data, I pay attention to not
only what my participants are saying in narrative interviews, but also my role in scaffolding and co-constructing the discourse. Anna DeFina (2009) writes against approaches which view interview narratives as “artificial social encounters” (237) and unnatural. Interview-elicited data can be seen as quite natural as long as researchers “do not erase the interview context”, but account for the “interactional context for storytelling, [...] the interviewer’s role in positioning the interviewee in autobiographical talk, [and] the co-production of narrative” (234-235).

People tell stories to do something, and the evolving and emergent purposes of an account at any point in the interview should be tracked by the researcher. Additionally a narrative is going to be drawing from given genres, such as anecdote, habitual narrative, or hypothetical story accounts. Interviews as conversational events may not fit the autobiographical “long story” model. My elicited data are in an interview setting, and are narrative accounts of language learning, a term which DeFina defines as “recapitulations of past events constructed as responses to an explicit or implied ‘why’ or ‘how’ evaluative question by an interlocutor [...] they are eminently explanatory and dialogic” (2009:240). Narrative accounts are contingent, and are inevitably affected by the content they had just been exposed to at the StepOut training, their view of me as a researcher, and the co-presence in the case of married couples of their spouse.

Researchers using narrative data also must describe the transcription methods selected in order to make explicit how the theoretical approach to personhood and subjectivity is being enacted in the representation of speaking subjects (Riessman 2008). It is therefore vital that I attend to how other voices are animated or appropriated in their narrative accounts, and what types of selves, or personae, my participants might be
enacting as they speak, erasing some possible interpretations of past actions and foregrounding others. I as a researcher am very present in the co-construction of especially the narrative interviews that I elicit. My interviewees have a mental image of who I am ("researcher" “linguist” “language expert” “successful language learner” “Christian”), what I want to hear, and may seek to align with me. Any analysis I undertake of linguistic artifacts produced in my presence must account for these forces.

2.4 INTERVIEW COLLECTION METHODS

Much of the data presented in this study has been drawn from narratives of language learning experiences, which I elicited from my participants. The typical interview lasted about 45 minutes to an hour; for married couples, both spouses were jointly present, so it took longer to complete the interview. The context of the interviews was during the language learning segment of StepOut, when participants were being actively exposed to the GPA learning method, and were being asked for the first time in many of their lives to be strategic and reflective about their past experiences with and future goals for language learning. The interview at StepOut became part of this process, and many participants used it as a chance to comment on, critique or process not only what they were hearing at StepOut, and reading in the articles, but also their past successes and failures with language learning, and the ways they had felt supported or unsupported in the past. Participants may have seen me as being part of the overall program of StepOut, even though I was only meeting with participants headed to Europe, and thereby transitively aligned me, by association, with the GPA.

As I was introduced as a doctoral student in linguistics, who was interested in language learning, participants may have felt more pressure to display linguistic
knowledge or prowess, as the folk concept of linguist is often “successful language learner”. They also saw and signed a research consent form, which foregrounded my identity as a university student and linguist. Participants did often ask me which languages I spoke fluently, which I said I would answer at the end of the interview. Before the recorder, placed on a table in plain sight of the interviewees, was turned on, I established rapport by talking about my past connections with Love the World, mutual friends in the organization and some of my own experiences living abroad. After the participants seemed at ease, I turned on the recorder and asked the following questions:

1. What have been your past experiences with language learning? What languages have you tried learning and what have you found worked or did not work with you?
2. What were your past experiences with learning specifically the language you are trying to learn now? Had you been in that country before?
3. Are there things you are doing now to learn the language (before you go over)? Why or why not?
4. What can you already do in that language, and what kinds of things are difficult for you to do?
5. How do you plan to go about learning this language when you arrive in the field? (This connected to an assignment for which they had to make a language plan).
6. What are your goals for where you would like to be after 6 months in the field? One year?
7. What kinds of things can you do in English in your field site, and what kinds of things do you have to do in the host language?
8. What will be your biggest obstacles in learning the language?
9. What is at stake for you, as Christians, in learning this language well or not learning this language well?

After we had discussed these questions, which often sparked digressions and elaborations and secondary questions, I let them ask me questions. Very interesting conversation was often sparked at this point, so I learned to remove the recorder from the center of the table,
and put it beside me, with the recorder still in view, but not central to attention. Informal discussion of language would often arise at this point. At the end of the interview I asked for permission to follow up with them via Skype interviews and a visit to them at their field sites. Most of them expressed great willingness to assist me in this way, and invited me for a visit, arranging to accommodate my field visits.

These narratives then, although not spontaneously emerging, can be seen as a type of problem-solving narrative, of the kind often studied in educational research (such as Jonassen & Hernandez-Serrano 2002, Herman 2003) or child development (Feldman 1989). My presence is crucial in the formation of these narratives, as I am positioned as an expert in solving the problematic situations which arise in the course of language learning. Just as a student may narrate an issue to a teacher, in order to come up with a solution, with or without the teacher's help, the participants in my study are actively evaluating the narratives they produce as they produce them. Many commented that they had never had to talk about their language learning before. In a way then, I enact with my participants the construct of “assisted performance” which is essential to sociocultural theory and the Growing Participator Approach to language learning they are taught. Participants may “lean on” my presence or perceived expertise as they actively fashion their learnerhood throughout the course of the interviews.

2.5 REMOTE GATHERING OF MID-FIELD DATA

I originally hoped to follow up on these interviews with Skype conversations after six months and after one year. This proved to be difficult to organize for several reasons. The time differentials, the busy schedules of family and ministry, being away on trips, and perhaps participants' reluctance to discuss how language learning was going (often
already proving to be much slower and more difficult than imagined at StepOut) made it hard to arrange a suitable time. Also some participants were delayed from their expected arrival times by as much as a year and a half. The original regular longitudinal design thus broke down, but I was able to have two Skype conversations with most of the field workers I interviewed at StepOut 2010, and one with all the workers I interviewed at StepOut 2011 before visiting them in their field sites in March and April 2012. This allowed me to get an intermediate snapshot of learners’ experiences, between their participation in the StepOut orientation and the actual on-site field visits. At these Skype interviews I asked participants to describe what they had been doing to learn the language, whether they had to alter the plans or goals they had made at StepOut, and why and how they were altered. I also asked them for more detail about English use in their lives and in their host communities. At the end of the conversation, which usually lasted 25 to 45 minutes, I again asked if it would be OK to visit them at their field sites to observe the realities of the language and learning situations. This was originally going to be in the fall of 2011, but from summer 2011 it became clear that the field visits would have to actually occur in spring 2012.

Another source of information that I continued to collect from my participants from the time of their participation at StepOut through the present day is that I receive most of their support letters. These are letters which are sent home to those who are investing financially in their projects, and which aim to describe what life is like at the field sites, and update supporters about the progress of the mission. Language learning and issues that arise from being language learners were frequently mentioned in such letters and were important in filling in the gaps, and giving me a sense of how their
learning strategies might be evolving. Participants are reluctant to go into too much detail about language learning difficulties in those letters, but I was able to ascertain what methods they were using, and what forces were shaping their perspectives on language learning.

Perhaps the most useful occasions for gathering data were the field visits that I made. I made two visits to the field, to conduct interviews with my participants, to observe their interactions over the course of a typical ministry week, and to interview the many other people with who they interact at their field sites. The timing of these field visits, relative to other means of data collection is illustrated in Figure 2.1 below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>July 2010</td>
<td>StepOut 2010: pre-field interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July-August 2010</td>
<td>Field visits: Country Y, Georgia, Country Z</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 2010</td>
<td>ICLL Conference: Interviews of participants, presentations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov 2010-June 2011</td>
<td>Follow-up Skype interviews and support letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2011</td>
<td>Observation of PILAT language acquisition training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July 2011</td>
<td>StepOut 2011: pre-field interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aug 2011-Feb 2012</td>
<td>Follow-up Skype interviews and support letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March-May 2012</td>
<td>Field visits: Italy, Germany, Croatia, Slovenia, Hungary, Bosnia, Slovakia, Sweden</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jun 2012-2013</td>
<td>Follow-up Skype interviews and support letters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2.1:** Means and sources of data collection organized chronologically

The field visit in 2010 saw me visiting pre-existing contacts I had in the organization, rather than field workers I first met at StepOut. I spent five weeks on this visit, spending roughly a week in each of four field sites where Love the World has a
team of American field workers. I stayed with my primary contact in each of these cities, which gave me opportunities to conduct a formal interview and record spontaneous commentary of informally occurring discussions of language learning. Additionally, in staying with them for a week, I gained a sense of the life rhythms of field workers. I was also introduced to the teammates of my primary contacts, and was able to do at least a formal interview with each of those teammates. These field visits served to pilot the field visits I did in 2012, and were influential in making me aware of issues to ask about and behaviors to be watching out for in my next field trip.

After StepOut 2010 and this field visit, I went to the International Congress on Language Learning in October 2010. This conference, described in more detail in Section 4.4.3, sees influential figures in the assemblage of language learning in the missions/development world to share best practices and hear about the latest issues and developments. Here I was able to attend and record many seminars, as well as conduct interviews with staff of Mission Training International (MTI), the organization which hosted the conference. I was invited to visit MTI in June 2011 to observe their pre-field language acquisition training, which is the most popular and respected in the field, and to interview workers from different organizations who were also headed to Eastern Europe.

My main field visit occurred in March and April of 2012. I had originally planned a longer field stay, which would have enabled me to do more in-depth ethnographic analysis. Due to funding, the timing of my academic semester, and the timing of my participants’ ministry calendar, I had to shorten the field visits to seven weeks. I planned that seven weeks ahead of time, in conjunction with my participants, to be as efficient as possible and during a period that represented a very typical week in their ministry.
calendar. I stayed roughly a week in each field site, shadowing one participant who became a key informant, and about whose life I was able to get a more detailed picture of language usage over the course of a typical ministry week. My key informants were Michael in Italy, Mark in Bosnia, Adam in Sweden, Jacob in Slovakia, and Erica and Kristin in Slovenia.

In addition to that one key informant, I did follow-up interviews with the participants who I had met at their StepOuts, and conducted such incidental interviews with others (Sprinters, more experienced field workers, host nationals, policy makers) as I could, and recorded pedagogical settings such as language classes and tutoring sessions, and spontaneously occurring conversations. I made copies of documents and pedagogical materials that were relevant to language acquisition. I also visited the regional office in Budapest and interviewed some Hungarian field workers, and field workers in Croatia and Germany who were longer term staff, in administrative positions.

2.6 ANALYSIS AND TRANSCRIPTION PROTOCOLS

I coded all data (recordings of interviews, interactions, instructional settings, primary documents, field notes, photographs, letters to supporters) in NVivo, a software program for managing qualitative data. The program allows for (open) coding of text, audio, video and photographic data. I took each data source and highlighted sections that I felt related to a certain aspect of learnerhood, coding them as mentioning that aspect. This allowed me to return all relevant data points which spoke to a given theme. The list of themes that I used to code the data is included in Appendix D. Portions of the data then are incorporated into the text body of this dissertation, used as evidence for the various claims I make. Often there were many instances where a particular topic was discussed or
stance taken. To save space, I present the most relevant and representative examples of data as evidence to support my observations.

As Elinor Ochs notes, “transcripts and translations in anthropology articles plunk utterances down in their entirety, but this practice belies the temporal experience of ordinary meaning-making” (Ochs 2012:154). Catherine Riessman (2008) argues that any transcription system presupposes an ideology of self. For example, some transcriptions erase the interviews backchanneling or interjections; in such transcriptions, the speaker appears as an independent subject, containing pre-existing narratives reflecting a pre-existing self just waiting to “burst forth”. If a transcription includes the interviewers’ turns, interweaving them with those of the interviewee, and noting the pausing or overlap, a different picture of self emerges. The self then is contingent, not pre-existing, but performed for and co-created with a specific audience, including the interviewer and potential future audiences. In such transcripts, selves, and the narratives which reveal them, are tentative and mutable, and the interviewer and interviewee steer each other to adopt shifting personae over the course of the interview. When recorded language is presented as data in this dissertation, it will be presented in one of two transcription formats.

First, since the unit of my ethnography is an entire organization, and not one localized community, there are many instances where I want to highlight the presence of common themes across several different nodes of the organization. In such cases, the micro-interactional context, the “temporal experience of ordinary meaning making”, is less crucial for the analysis, and the interviewees utterances are presented in a block of
text, indented on both sides. Data presented in this format can be thought of as primarily **content** analysis.

This block format does presuppose an individual, agentive self, not being steered or directed by me, the interviewer. Even in these transcripts however, I try not to “clean up the text” and try to render non-standard, colloquial, and ungrammatical forms just as they were said. I leave reformulations and abandoned utterances in the transcript, to reveal how the narrative emerges in a kind of self-dialogue, through trial error. I also render long pauses with an ellipsis “...” and short pauses with an en dash “-”. When speech is presented in this block format I also will use periods “.” to show that an utterance appears to have been completed. When data extracts of this type is fairly short, I incorporate the transcript into the text body, setting it apart inside quotes “ ”. In such cases, other ventriloquated voices are then set off in single quotes ‘ ’.

Second, there are many other instances where I want to “zoom in” to one extract of a narrative. In such extracts the exigence of the narrative becomes essential to the analysis- the identity of the learner, or the dynamics of the context in which it is produced matter more. This is true when multiple speakers are interacting, when my contributions as the interviewer are clearly shaping the development of the narrative, and when stances or persona are enacted through the micro-level construction of the narrative. This transcription is used when it becomes especially salient that in conversations, “feelings may accrue and diminish, thoughts may be initiated and withdrawn, repetitions may evoke poetic qualities, and the sound of one’s own and others’ intonations, voice qualities, and rhythms feed back into the living experience of enacted language” (Ochs 2012:155). These line-by-line transcripts can be thought of as primarily **narrative** analysis.
In such line-by-line transcripts, the speakers are identified by their first initial in the text body and to the left of the first line of a turn, and named in a parenthetical citation beneath the excerpt. As an interviewer, my own contributions are labeled “I:”. Overlaps are rendered with a turn beginning with a square bracket “[” positioned under the point in the previous utterance where the overlapping turn begins. Each new line represents a pause in the conversation. Significant pauses are rendered with an ellipsis “...” rising intonation with a “?”, and emphatic utterances with a “!” When individual turns need to be referred to in the analysis, turns will be numbered starting with the number 1. If numbering continues across two extracts, it means that these extracts are consecutive in the narrative. Restarting at 1 indicated a new interview context.

In both forms of transcript, there are several other textual conventions I use. Each transcript is cited by the pseudonym of the speaker, the country of their service, and the occasion and year at which the data was gathered. A citation such as (Michael, Italy, interview StepOut 2011) would indicate data gathered from Michael, who was being sent to Italy, in an interview at the pre-field training program called StepOut. Besides StepOut interview, I will also note if it is a Skype interview (collected after arriving to the field site), a field interview (in-person interview taken in the field sites), or field observation, a record of a spontaneous conversation or comment arising during my field visits.

Text inside square brackets [ ] is supplying the discourse-obvious anaphor for a pronoun (i.e. you, it, they), a deictic (that, those, here), or any other form whose interpretation would be obvious if the entire transcript were provided, but which is rendered ambiguous by the extraction of a single excerpt from its larger discursive context. A comment in round parentheses ( ) contains an editorial comment by me, not
present in the original recording, but which is apparent from information beyond the extract, and necessary to interpret or draw attention to a given point. A comment in pointed brackets { } is one where I am commenting on the phonetic quality or accompanying actions of the speaker. Sarcastic speech, laughter, pointing, smiling, and other paralinguistic cues are represented in such brackets. An ellipsis … represents trailing speech or an unfinished thought. An ellipsis contained in parentheses (…) indicates that a portion of the transcript, which was not relevant to the point being made, has been removed. A speaker’s own emphasis is shown by using ALL CAPITALS. When I, as the author, want to draw the reader’s attention to a phrase, I will indicate that phrase in **bold**. Italics are used for foreign words, or when I am re-presenting a written comment that also contained italics in the original.
3. SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERHOOD AS A CONSTRUCT

In this chapter, I will explain the nature of second language learnerhood as used in this dissertation. I pay particular attention to the concept of socialization, and how scholarship of socialization has been applied to first language, second language, and in this dissertation, second language acquisition behavior. I then show how the construct of second language learnerhood can be integrated into several leading SLA theories, and finally into the sociolinguistics of globalization.

3.1 DEFINITION OF LEARNERHOOD

This dissertation will deal largely with a construct I refer to as SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERHOOD. The suffix “-hood” presumes a condition or state, which includes beliefs, but is not limited to them. I use the term learnerhood to mean a language learner’s evolving reflexive beliefs about how to learn and when to use forms from the language or language repertoires which are the target of their acquisition. This construct is formed through two separate processes — 1) socialization into practices of using this target language, 2) and socialization into beliefs about how acquisition itself should proceed, as they seek out instruction, input and interaction in the target language. Specifically, learnerhood would encompass individuals’...

- ...beliefs about how best to go about learning the target language of a host culture (including input, pedagogy, interaction, output)
- ... beliefs about what is at stake in learning or not learning the target language of a host culture
• beliefs about how best to perform via language a second language self which will be ratified in some way as legitimate in the host culture

• language practices which instantiate and circulate those beliefs, bringing them into fruition

The term learnerhood is not employed in this study as it has been by pedagogical psychologists (Varelas et al.2010), but refers here to the collection of language learning ideologies and practices which are relevant for cross-cultural workers. It is in some ways analogous to the concept of PERSONHOOD used by researchers in socialization and ethnopsychology concerned about what it means to conceive of one’s self as a person, which varies cross-culturally. In such studies, “language has emerged as a crucial tool” serving as a way to look into “native systems for interpreting self, extend(ing) beyond terminologies, metaphors, and idioms to ethnopsychological propositions, as in Lutz (1985)” (Miller et al.1990:295). Anthropologists have long argued that the constraints and possibilities of a speaker’s acquired linguistic system sheds light on understanding how that speaker perceives and experiences reality (Sapir 1921, Sapir 1927, Whorf 1956, Gumperz & Levinson 1996). Agha (2007) notes that personhoods sometimes center around stable models or “types”, which relates to stereotypical targets from performing personhoods. I find narrative evidence that my participants analogously refer to stable “types” of second language learnerhood, such as “the visual learner” or “the book learner.”

Elinor Ochs (2012) notes that in psycho-cultural and medical anthropology and other disciplines there has been a “preoccupation with language as an inauthentic representation of ideas, emotions and other entities” (146), language as an abstract arbitrary symbolic system, akin to Saussure’s (1959) langue. The logic follows that certain human experiences (such as loss, grief, pain, love) cannot be fully expressed using words, that there is an insurmountable disconnect between the “authentic” realm of
thoughts, feelings and beliefs, and the external “mindless and imprisoning force of language” (146), especially informal ordinary talk. Ochs argues that such a division is warranted; admitting that language is “built to be [an] incomplete representation of the world” (148), and inherently imposes categorization onto human experience. She notes that language forms do not merely signify arbitrary denotations, but also indexically point to the experienced worlds of individual speakers and society. By exploiting its symbolic (denotational), indexical, and performative properties, a speaker can use language to authentically create and project the realm of experiences, feelings and beliefs. Clifford Geertz’s (1974) division between EXPERIENCE-NEAR (produced by the natives) and EXPERIENCE-DISTANT (produced by the ethnographer) language is thus rendered unhelpful. Even in a second language and in a host culture, as learners speak about foreign concepts using forms acquired as an adult, these new linguistic mappings become experience-near, as language users embody and deploy them in authentic conversation.

If language is the primary site for expressing and creating personhood -- lived experience -- then second language learnerhood is key to understanding learners’ means of projecting and ongoingly experiencing their second language identity. In Ochs’ (2012) view, that language is the stuff of experiencing the world as a self, there is nothing which limits such “language as experience” to the first language. A language partially learned as an adult, especially the ordinary, conversational, informal language, becomes the primary means of creating a self at the field site. In Ochs’ words, conversation, even when held in an adult second language “is the baroque site for working out situated versions of who we think we are through clumsy propositions in the making and disjointed narratives of personal experience” (2012:153). Such propositions and narratives are precisely the
means by which I analyze learnerhood, the situated versions of speakers’ *being* in a second language.

### 3.2 Learnerhood and Language Ideology

A foundational component of second language learnerhood is BELIEFS about the host language, propositions which flow from learners' NATURALIZED (in the sense of escaping learners’ scrutiny) ideology of language. Therefore, before locating second language learnerhood within the context of language socialization and SLA theory, in this section I examine the intersection of learnerhood and the field of language ideology.

#### 3.2.1 Defining language ideology

Language ideology as a field coalesced in the mid 1990’s in response to work on language contact, language variation, language policy and ethnography of speaking (Woolard & Schieffelin 1994). As second language learnerhood includes beliefs about the self as a second language speaker, the fact that there is “much cultural variation in ideas about speech” (55) is especially relevant when analyzing the learnerhoods of missions and development workers, who embody contact between different cultural systems.

Language ideology has been defined as “sets of beliefs about language articulated by users as a rationalization or justification of perceived language structure and use” (Silverstein 1979:193) and “shared bodies of commonsense notions about the nature of language in the world” (Rumsey 1990:346). For example my participants, by learning a language in the first place, presuppose that their English competence will not suffice for all their communicative needs. These field workers believe that in order to accomplish their tasks in their field sites they must identify and master certain ways of using
language which circulate at those sites. Irvine emphasizes the INTERESTEDNESS inherent in language ideology, calling it a “cultural system of ideas about social and linguistic relationships, together with their loading of moral and political interests” (Irvine 1989:225). The relationship and moral aspects of this definition are particularly salient to my participants, who aim to have spiritual conversations, and the GPA includes several articles which explicitly ground Thomson’s own ideology of language in moral and relational imperatives.

Kathryn Woolard & Bambi Schieffelin (1994) point out that language ideologies, “constructed from the sociocultural experience of the speaker” (Kroskrity 2004:196), are often unnoticed and uncontested by people in their discourse. This ‘invisibility’ of language ideologies, in particular, has become the subject of scrutiny of linguistic anthropologists. Linguistic anthropologists refer to this process as NATURALIZATION through discursive strategies such as presuppositions, underspecification, exploiting indexical links, a set of assumptions is positioned as being self-evident, as being natural. In my population terms such as “Slovak”, “heart language”, “host language”, “speak correctly”, “doing language”, “making mistakes” and “broken Hungarian” are used by my participants in narratives, in a way which is natural, i.e. without noticing that these are all ideologically-loaded terms. The underlying assumptions are rendered invisible, thus when such terms are deployed, neither I nor the other interviewees present consciously contest that terminology.

Language ideologies are not simply reflected in the beliefs which are made visible in representations of learnerhood. Language ideologies are actively created throughout the language learning trajectories of my participants. Peter DeCosta notes that “the
creation of ideologies – at both the micro and macro levels – tends also to occur in the realm of the imagined community (Anderson 1991) as the individual learner and the society to which she belongs often create a mutually reinforcing idealized space” (2010:776). The creation of ideologies occurs in two kinds of scales. There are “long term” ideologies which steer the larger acquisition project, as well as the micro-level, interactionally emergent ideologies which arise from taking stances in conversation. There are also ideologies which are seen to have wide geographical circulation, holding among many learners in many places, and those which are very local, dependent on the local linguistic ecology in which an interaction is situated. Stanton Wortham (2001) also argues that scale matters; social identity is mediated as speakers draw on language ideologies with wide societal circulation. This dissertation analyzes both large and small geographical scales (Chapter 7), and large and small time scales, through the emphasis on trajectories (Chapters 8 & 9) as well as the micro-level narrative analyses which are woven throughout. DeCosta advocates for such micro-level interaction, which pays attention to circulation.

Learning events need to be examined at a microlevel – by way of analyzing learner positionings over stretches of time and as mediated through different forms of stylization – while situated against larger structural forces. This is primarily because ideologies are bidirectional in nature: they are created in the course of learning events, while also produced as a consequence of circulating language ideologies. (DeCosta 2010:778)

Beliefs about how to learn and when to use the linguistic system being acquired, which is my definition of learnerhood, are constrained to a large extent by ideologies about what a host language is, and what a host language can be.
3.2.2 Language ideology and second language learners

Although Claire Kramsch (2000) points out the reasons behind the use of the name “second language acquisition” over “applied linguistics” or other terms, there are ideological problems with the term “second”. In SLA theory, the language being learned is most often called the L2 or “second language”. Although some theorists do distinguish the process of “second language” acquisition from “third language” acquisition (Bardel & Lindqvist 2010), in most cases “second language” does not mean that it is a learner’s second attempt to learn a language, or second most-proficient language, but rather any language other than the native language attempted to learn. This is obviously problematic, as a speaker can have multiple native languages learned in infancy, and have multiple ongoing language acquisition projects as an adult.

“Second language” or “L2” also implies that the system of communication being targeted by learners is another “language”, implying a reified and artificial distinction between languages as objects (Blommaert 2010), when in fact adult “second dialect acquisition” (Tagliamonte and Molfenter 2007, Munro et al.1999) or “second repertoire acquisition” (Benor 2010) is subject to many of the same cognitive and sociocultural processes as “second language acquisition”. The strict division between “first” and “second” also denies the pervasiveness of mixed languages (Winford & Bakker 2009, Kittel et al. 2010), “light” languages (O’Shannessy 2006), code-switching (Bhatia & Ritchie 1999), or strategic “translanguaging” patterns (Creese & Blackledge 2010, Canagarajah 2011, Hornberger & Link 2012) in language learners. The reification of the “target” language as something distinctly other evokes discourses about language purity in the European setting (Bilaniuk 1997, Estival & Pennycook 2010, Jorgensen 2012).
where “unmixed” language practices are seen as morally “pure” or “valuable” language practices.

The term “second language learnerhood” in itself might be a jarring one to some researchers on language and globalization, such as Sinfree Makoni & Alastair Pennycook. The title of their 2007 collection, *Disinventing and Reconstituting Languages*, alludes to the fact that within the sociolinguistics of globalization, studies of language behavior have moved away from codes or varieties, and taken “a semiotic turn”. Yet the term “second language” implies the existence of stable and established languages which can be counted. The fields of SLA and the sociolinguistics of globalization tend to differ greatly when it comes to ideologies about language. SLA theories focusing on a bounded and internally-consistent “target language” closely associated with a speech community (people group) and a country.

The sociolinguistics of globalization however, focuses on “flows”, a perspective which makes the traditional notion of the speech community somewhat obsolete (Rampton 1998; Silverstein 1998). According to DeCosta (2010:772), the “one language—one culture mapping, and its association with homogeneity, uniformity, and territorial boundedness is out of sync with contemporary reality”. While SLA research discusses “languages”, as the name of the field implies, the sociolinguistics of globalization eschews the notion of “language (as a count noun) acquisition”, and focuses instead on the acquisition of individual forms, or resources. Each resource has its own circulation, with meanings at multiple scales, and these resources get aggregated into various sets of styles known as “repertoires”. These contrasting views are in tension, and in this chapter I hope to draw attention to approaches within second language acquisition research that
might allow for a more repertoire-based approach, and locate the idea of learnerhood as a way of analyzing not just the “language learner” but also the “one who languages”.

3.2.3 Language ideology and evangelicalism

In Section 2.1, I described how missions in the 19th and 20th centuries was characterized by an ideology of settled, stable, rural populations, divided into people groups, each with their own essentialized and identifying language. Globalization processes, such as population shifts from rural to urban and from Global South to Global North, the movement of the “center of gravity” for Christianity to the global south, and the predominance of digital and mobile communications have changed the missions discussion toward urban, mobile, unstable and mixed populations. This change has not been wholesale however, and one finding of this study the one nation, one people, one culture ideology is very much alive in the missions world. Woolard & Schieffelin (1994) note that “although the validity of the nationalist ideology of language has often been debated or debunked, less attention traditionally has been given to understanding how the view of language as symbolic of self and community has taken hold in so many different settings” (61). The missions and development enterprise is one such setting, where the ideology of “language = culture = people” has taken firm hold. Woolard & Schieffelin go on to say that “the equation of one language/one people” stems from “Western insistence on the authenticity and moral significance of the mother tongue” (Woolard & Schieffelin 1994:61). The moral significance of the mother tongue is crystallized within the missions and development assemblage into the ideology of “heart language”, which is carefully analyzed in the context of Love the World workers in Section 4.3.3.
The “heart language” is the ideology that there is one Saussurean grammatical system, which is named and counted as a language, and which is most closely wrapped around the core of a speaker. This language is the “first language”, learned from the “mother”, and is seen as the default system through which the ideational content of dreams, prayers, spiritual epiphanies, and self- and community-transformation projects (such as those in Handman 2007) is encoded into linguistic forms in the speaker’s own mind and thoughts. Translation projects, such as those undertaken by SIL (Besnier 2010, Handman 2010) are aimed at creating texts for communal use which orthographically represent as closely possible the “heart language” of individuals. Thus the “heart language” is not only located within an individual, but is also assigned to a community of speakers, speakers which share not only a language, but a bounded geographical territory, a demonym, and a culture. SIL’s Ethnologue project is an attempt to enumerate all these “heart language communities”, called “people groups” by Winter et al. (1992).

Another overarching theme in this dissertation is the tension among evangelicals between the language ideologies employed in sociocultural theory- repertoires, migrations, and specific competencies- on the one hand, and the persistent belief in discrete languages, national standards, people groups, and imagined static homogenous communities on the other. Key formational figures in the missions world have even used Bible passages to justify organizing missions around the idea of discrete tongues, tribes and nations (Winter et al.1992), and these writings are still foundational in pre-field preparation programs like PILAT or StepOut. When communicative competence or imagined future proficiencies are discussed in such situations, there are clear ideologies about the goal of field workers’ learnerhoods. The target of their acquisition projects is
not portrayed as competent performances of a mixed repertoire, but rather as “command” of an object, a tool to be mastered and which opens authentic participation in a community. Language is a noun in these cases, albeit one acquired incrementally, rather than a verb. Kataoka et al. (2013) is an example of recent work which challenges the idea which dominated missions for the 19th and 20th centuries that there is such a thing as communicative competence operating in homogenous communities, and such competence should be the acquisitional goal of missionaries.

3.3 LEARNERHOOD AS PRODUCT OF SOCIALIZATION

Learnerhood, as the mental representation at any given time of what it means to be a language learner in general, and specifically the host language of the host culture, is a moving target. Like all cultural processes, learnerhood is the product of socialization. Socialization is a process wherein forces cause a learner to adjust their personal sense of learnerhood. Language use is not only the goal but also the primary medium through which models of language learnerhood are imparted to or at least aimed at the L2 learners. Socialization as a framework for study within linguistics emerged from the literature on first language socialization. Socialization literature, rooted in the Vygotskian tradition (Vygotsky 1978), focuses on how experts in a community apprentice novices into practices of interacting with tools (i.e. like textual and linguistic artifacts), rather than focusing on the cognitive functions within an individual. Cognition in this model is not housed in an isolated mind, but rather occurs among individuals who are discursively interacting with tools (Lantolf 2007). Socialization involves apprenticeship into practices through relationships with experts in a community, rather than through their individualistic experience of the world. Socialization theorists also
draw on Pierre Bourdieu’s (1997) idea of HABITUS, an embodied mental structure acquired through habitual social practices, to explain how learners are socialized into communicative competence. This focus on linguistic and discourse practices, allows socialization theorists to avoid any individual/society binarism.

Socialization researchers often invoke “communicative competence” as the goal of language socialization. Kinayoshi Kataoka and colleagues describe communicative competence as “emerging out of embodied, intersubjective, and multimodal interaction. Communicative competence is not pre-given but developmental, it thrives on on-going processes rather than fixed procedures, and it is informed by the specificity of contexts” (Kataoka et al 2013:1). This perspective of competence aligns with Vygotskian notions of learning through apprenticeship, with cognition being a product of interaction, not internalized thought processes. Unlike grammatical competence, the goal of more cognitive approaches to SLA (i.e. White 2007), communicative competence “is at once social, cultural, and cognitive” (Kataoka et al. 2013:1).

Ochs & Schieffelin (1986) laid the foundation for this approach in studies of processes of first language acquisition as it occurs through language socialization. In contexts ranging from the American dinner table to mission stations in New Guinea, they show how children are taught to use and conceptualize language through specific micro-level interactions with adults and other caregivers across the lifespan. Ana Celia Zentella’s (1997) work on New York Puerto Rican Spanish-English bilinguals illustrates how the practices of using the two codes and the indexical values which emerge from code-switching are also acquired through socialization. Garrett (2002), Ochs (2002), and Schieffelin & Kulick (2004) among others have focused on first language socialization,
with the local family, peers, or community as the sites of socialization. Wortham (2006) expands this focus to a multi-site approach involving the classroom, but local “communities” are still the primary scope of socialization. My plan to treat a transnational assemblage as a multi-sited approach to socialization is unprecedented.

Jinrak Son (2002) analyzed what I term socialization into second language learnerhood by conducting a longitudinal study of Korean field workers who were learning the Tagalog language for their missions work. The sites of socialization consisted of language classes, interactions with locals, interactions with more experienced field workers, and learners creating their own narratives about learning and using Tagalog. Their desire to learn the language, and decisions about how to go about doing so were partly shaped by the cultural worldview, encoded in a Whorfian sense into the Tagalog language itself, which were shown to be very different from those of Korean. The language’s forms and functions themselves challenged learners’ assumptions about how languages work and should be used. The fact that Tagalog is not an academic or literary language, and a language situated in a complex multilingual society also went against the Korean learners’ beliefs about learning a reified national language primarily through academic means and for academic expressions. The language practices of Tagalog teachers, experienced field workers, and their own interactions as students all became important means of socialization into learnerhood.

One of the means by which learnerhood evolves is hearing other learners’ 1st person narratives about learning and using languages. Phillip Johnson-Laird (1983), suggests that people understand such narrative accounts by building “mental models” on a two-stage process: 1) examining the linguistic cues in that narrative, and 2) inferring
based on real-world knowledge what the overall meaning of those cues must be, even if it is not a meaning that is implicitly stated. Language directed at the learners in explicit “expert-authored instructional frames” such as pre-field orientation is especially subject to this kind of evaluation. Bower and Morrow (1990:45) suggest that audiences “translate the surface form of text into underlying conceptual propositions”, constructing a mental REPRESENTATION of the experiences and events therein. In their approach however, representations are reified, and little attention is paid to the local interactional and co-constructed context of the narrative accounts.

Elisa Ikeda (2003) studies the role that classroom teachers’ narratives of language learning play in forming future field workers’ working beliefs about the best way to learn languages. Ikeda studies narratives offered in a class on language learning in a Christian university in Southern California. The teacher assigns a textbook, which is committed to a specific model of language learning, called LAMP (Brewster & Brewster 1976). Students reinterpret their past experiences with language learning as short-term ministries in light of the new ideology presented in the book via their act of producing a narrative using the new interactional schema. The students’ reinterpretation is uptaken and further reinforced by the stances that the teacher takes, aligning with the students’ new view. This is a clear instance of how narratives play a role in socialization into second language learnerhood among a population very similar to my participants. Wortham (2000) would argue that these students are not just passive consumers of a narrative, but would advocate for an approach which focuses on the evolving and co-constructed nature of a narrative. The same narrative account in Ikeda’s corpus, of a successful LAMP learner held up for emulation, might, according to Wortham, invoke different associations and be
translated into very different actions among the different hearers. Students’ ongoing verbal or non-verbal responses to the story may even shape the narrative itself. Therefore it is important for me to clarify that unlike Bower and Morrow (1990), representations of learnerhood are dynamic, and any representation of learnerhood that may be made visible through a narrative would be just a snapshot of a larger process. These snapshots of learnerhood are affected by context and open to being co-constructed with other interlocutors.

3.4 Modeling Learnerhood as a Synchronic and Diachronic Phenomenon

Socialization into second language learnerhood necessarily involves a tension between subject-external processes of apprenticeship housed in a culture or community of practice and subject-internal processes of cognitive development, housed in a subject’s mind or psyche. The role that external agents of socialization play fits within a Vygotskian framework of distributed cognition, and novices growing into accepted ways of being in the world, a model which aligns with sociocultural and socialization based theories of second language development. The role of internal cognitive development fits best within a Piagetian framework of evolving schema, a model that aligns with interlanguage approaches to second language development.

I can only assess learnerhood through participants’ own representations of learnerhood, as contingently expressed through narratives and other linguistic productions. This concept of representations of learnerhood as snapshots of a process relates to Jean Piaget’s idea of an evolving scheme (Piaget 1977). In Piaget’s theory of cognitive development, new schemas are developed and existing scheme are organized so as to more efficiently explain phenomena in the environment. Learnerhood is such a
system of schema- a model inside the learner to both explain observed and reported phenomena about L2 learning in the world, and a resource on which to draw from when selecting between possible actions relating to L2 learning. The goal of an evolving L2 learnerhood, as depicted in Figure 3.1, is two-fold. The first is communicative proficiency in the host language. The second is acquiring a way of using the host language which is acceptable to members of the host culture. Studies such as Gilmour (2007), Son (2002), Ikeda (2008), Kramsch (2006), Meadows (2010) all highlight the fact that communicative proficiency depends on depth of ethnographic understanding which can be only gained in field-based learning, rather than classroom learning, and reject the binary between language learning and culture learning.

By acquiring communicative competence in an acceptable way, learners can achieve legitimate participation (Lave & Wenger 1991) in the community of practice at their field sites. From a Bourdieusian perspective, this legitimate participation could be seen as the accrual of linguistic capital, linked to a need for recognition. DeCosta sees such contests for legitimate linguistic capital as being “enlarged and complexified at the national, state, and individual level in light of the globalized flow of people” (2010:771). Bryan Meadows’ (2010) studied missionaries’ narratives of language learning, noting how missionaries’ self-identified “ministry” goal is to carve out for themselves a legitimate role as a well-socialized participant. This goal washes back onto and guides their second language learning behaviors.
In Figure 3.1, an act of socialization at Time 1 provides input into a learner’s evolving schema of learnerhood- input such as narratives, explicit language acquisition training, or an analysis of past language learning experiences. At Time 2, the schema (Piaget 1997) or representation (Johnson & Laird 1983) of learnerhood in its current form serves to organize and constrain the L2 language behaviors produced by the learner. Learners process how these behaviors, such as L2 output, are received by other interlocutors. This processing can take the form of narratives (other-directed) or internal self-talk (self-directed). The interpretations of their language behavior resulting from this processing then feeds back into the evolving schema of learnerhood at Time 3. The newly revised sense of learnerhood can act as a filter for any new inputs to socialization at Time 4, as learners decide what to believe or disregard about that input.
3.5 Socialization into Learnerhood and the Evolution of Interlanguage

The above model of socialization into learnerhood, whereby input affects an evolving internal representation, out of which is generated, output which is then subject to feedback, is parallel to how language acquisition is conceptualized in many SLA theories. Most second language acquisition theories (VanPatten & Williams 2007) include at least the following three components in their acquisition model, as depicted in Figure 3.2: L2 input (which can vary in modality, comprehensibility, frequency, complexity), mental representations of the L2 grammar (called an interlanguage), and L2 output (which can vary in targetlikeness of phonology, grammaticality, pragmatic appropriateness).

![Figure 3.2: Input, mental representation (interlanguage) and output in SLA theory](image)

In SLA theory then, the input consists of linguistic structures, incorporated by learners into an evolving interlanguage grammar. That interlanguage grammar is used to generate output, output which is subject to feedback, feedback which revises the interlanguage grammar (Gass & Mackey 2007). Although this process is structurally similar to my model of learnerhood, in that input, internal representation and output all play a role, there are key differences. In socialization into learnerhood, as opposed to the evolution of interlanguage, the relevant data are not language forms per se, but metalanguage- language about using the L2 and being an L2 learner.
In most generative and cognitive approaches, the ongoing elaboration of the L2 interlanguage is fed by L2 input, and results in (while being reinforced by) L2 output. Those SLA theories which frame adult L2 learning as being parallel to children’s L1 learning tend to be primarily a theory of mind, of an evolving mental grammar, and not communication. They abstract the mind from the person or individual. Examples would be cognitive theories (Ellis 2008a) and theories that posit Universal Grammar as an organizing mechanism for adult language acquisition (White 2003), which focus their attention on input’s role in the evolving L2 interlanguage grammar which constrains output. However, second language acquisition as experienced by individuals is not merely a cognitive process whereby data is processed, constructed into a system and then reproduced, and attention only to the structural properties of the interlanguage ignores a learner’s lifeworld (Husserl 1970) or trajectory through cultural situations. While cognitive and generative theories are powerful in modeling interlanguage structures, input, output and feedback are not purely mental constructs; rather, all three depend on the learner’s sense of self and interactional context.

My emphasis on socialization’s role in the construction of second language learnerhood also parallels work that has analyzed the role socialization plays in the acquisition of second language proficiency. In contrast to the dominant universal grammar-based approaches to child language acquisition rooted in Noam Chomsky’s work, community-centered approaches to language acquisition draw heavily from Michael Halliday’s functionalism (Halliday and Webster 2006) and Lev Vygotsky’s (1978) ideas of apprenticeship. Vygotsky analyzed how “experts” apprentice “novices” into the appropriate ways of interacting with artifacts that exist in the social world, over
different time scales in the developmental sequences. In this case the relevant artifacts are
utterances (from the word level to the discourse level) used by communities to
accomplish social actions. Crucially, language learning is negotiated and situated in
communities and is a by-product of social interaction. Early work in sociolinguistics
(Labov 1972, Hymes 1972, Sacks 1989) also reflected this focus on language use in
communities, demonstrating that speaking is not merely producing grammatical
sentences, but using language in a pragmatically appropriate way for a given task,
audience and (in later sociolinguistic work) persona.

Deborah Poole (1992) pioneered extending language socialization theory to SLA,
while Karen Watson-Gegeo (2004) has even called for language socialization to even
replace the cognitive focus as the dominant paradigm in studying SLA. Michael Agar
(1994, 2008) advocated the term “second languaculture acquisition”, as language learning
cannot be divorced from cultural learning. “Languaculture acquisition” is a process
arrived at through authentic socialization and awareness (Roberts et al.2001, Scarino
2009, Shi 2006). Vygotskian-influenced applied linguists have applied language
socialization theory to the ESL enterprise (Canagarajah 2005, 2006a), second language
classroom interaction (Gregg 2006, Hall 2010, Lantolf 2000, Lantolf and Thorne 2006),
study-abroad immersion settings (Kinginger 2009) and language learning methodologies
2007), which will be described in more detail in the following chapter, is a language
learning methodology with deep roots in socialization-based model of SLA, and is of
special interest as the key paradigm for language acquisition within the organization,
Love the World.
Sociocultural theories of second language acquisition, are those which focus on the roles which observation, analysis, and modeling of socially-sanctioned ways of speaking play in the development of language competence, the most “natural” way of using linguistic forms within a given community, as opposed to focusing on automatic, grammar-forming mental processes (Lantolf & Thorne 2006). The cognitivist theory that SLA depends on cognitive strategies sensitive to individual variation (such as memory, metalinguistic awareness, analytical ability, motivation, and noticing input) were at odds with the NATURAL APPROACH (Krashen & Terrell 1983) an approach which posited a stronger analogy between L1 and L2 acquisition. This position, rooted in Krashen’s (1982) work, hypothesized relatively effortless acquisition as long as learners are exposed to naturalistic L2 input, at a level of difficulty a little above their competence, embodied in real communicative tasks.

Communicative approaches, such as the “Natural Approach” (Krashen and Terrell 1983) then, use minimal manipulation of or overt attention to second language grammar and assume that language acquisition will occur as long as learners are exposed to naturalistic input at a level of difficulty a little above their competency. Sociocultural second language studies (Lantolf 2000, Lantolf 2006, Lantolf & Thorne 2006) hold that input alone is insufficient to bootstrap language proficiency. Instead, interactions with other speakers “apprentice” (in the Vygotskian sense) second language learners into being full-fledged members of a language’s community of speakers (Byrnes 2006). Apprenticeship involves development of integrative motivation as well as attention to and repetition of language chunks and phrases, and pragmatic competency is a key value.
While Krashen's Natural Approach was at odds with cognitivist approaches in claiming that overt cognitive strategies were less important to acquisition than comprehensible input, and at odds with generativist approaches in claiming that adult language acquisition would be more complete if it mimicked the conditions of child language acquisition, the Natural Approach shared with these two other approaches the fact it is a theory of mind-internal language learning. Sociocultural theory is in opposition to all these approaches in that is a theory of mind-external language learning. For Krashen communication is in service of language learning- a learner communicates in order to learn the language. For sociocultural theorists like Lantolf and Thorne, language learning is in service of communication- an apprentice hones in on language behaviors in order to communicate.

Two linguists have already specifically applied language socialization theory to classrooms where missionary language learners are trained in L2 language proficiency (and indirectly into beliefs about L2 proficiency). Carla Stoneberg (1995) looked at socialization into beliefs about and practices of missionary learners of Spanish in a Central American classroom, focusing on obstacles to ultimate attainment of proficiency, such as self-identification and beliefs about the language learning process. Ikeda (2008) studied a language preparation program for adult field workers to Japan, attending to their beliefs about language proficiency and Japanese use, and how these intersected with the learners’ religious identities. Since the first activities and relationships which field workers engaged in are often related explicitly to language learning, Ikeda argues that the linguistic and interactive practices exhibited in language classes reinforce or counteract institutional goals about the types of relationships that field workers should establish with
host nationals. My study adopts this focus on field-based expatriate language learners but changes the scope. Rather than focusing on one geographical classroom and cohort, I am interested in how socialization creates beliefs about language learning in general, and shapes learners practices in the field over time. This interest includes the pre-field classroom, but goes beyond it, examining learnerhoods encountered in a variety of settings, across the entire length of field workers' service.

3.6 TOWARDS INTEGRATING LEARNERHOOD INTO SLA THEORIES

Unlike first language acquisition, adult language acquisition involves a great degree of variability in ultimate attainment, something which may be attributable to the interference of social or psychological variables which engage with the input-interlanguage-output model. Since language acquisition is done by humans, many other sociological and psychological variables involving the social or psychological self have been noted to effect language learning, such as strategy choice (O’Malley & Chamot 1990, Nyikos & Oxford 1993), integrative motivation (Gardner 1982, Crookes & Schmidt 1991), so-called “affective filter” effects (by Krashen 1982), anxiety (Scovel 1978, MacIntyre & Gardner 1989), sociability (Liu & Jackson 2008), and willingness to negotiate breakdowns in communication (Gass & Varonis 1993). Danny Hinson (1999) examines some of these variables in the particular context of adult missionary language learning. These studies have shown that beliefs, beliefs beyond simply representations of interlanguage structure, may intervene in acquisition. “Buffers” of these self-variables, which emerge from a learner's beliefs or representations of language learning, might affect what kind of input is sought out and received, as well as what kind of output is produced.
3.6.1 Learnerhood in the Monitor Hypothesis

One SLA theory which has tried to integrate focus on the evolving interlanguage grammar with attention to learners’ sense of “self” is Krashen’s (1982) Monitor Theory, which was the dominant paradigm for SLA throughout the last part of the twentieth century, organizing both research priorities and pedagogical methods, the “Natural Approach” mentioned above. Krashen conceives of language acquisition as a function of communicative interaction, and pedagogical methods based in his work are often called “communicative approach”. Such methods still form the basis of instruction in many classrooms, and are hailed as an improvement over previous behaviorist methods rooted in contrastive grammatical analysis. Krashen’s “affective filter” posits that a learner’s self-awareness, their fears, anxieties and preconceptions, can act to block linguistic input in the L2, keeping it from being incorporated into the internal representation of the interlanguage. The dynamics of communication and emotional state of the learner complicate therefore models of second language development which focus on the structure of the interlanguage, abstracting it away from the embodied social life of a learner.

3.6.2 Learnerhood in the Interaction Hypothesis

Susan Gass and Allison Mackey (2006) try to define more specifically how these “self” variables affect input and output in the context of L2 interactions. Their model follows the basic pattern laid out in Figure 3.2, with input feeding an internal representation of the grammar which constrains the output. In her work (Gass & Varonis 1994, Gass & Mackey 2000, Gass & Mackey 2006), Gass complicated the model by adding several stages where psychological and sociocultural process may intervene. Input
must be noticed in order to become intake, that which is added to the internal representation. Whether or not a learner notices input depends not only on psychological factors, akin to Krashen’s affective filter hypothesis, but also on sociocultural factors. A learner has beliefs about what to pay attention to, and what to ignore when attending to language.

Before returning to the role of learnerhood in SLA theory, it is worth elaborating what role NOTICING plays in language acquisition. Noticing, as a variable, has been productively analyzed in classroom pedagogy situations. While sociocultural and Krashenesque approaches to SLA focus on subconscious learning, Robert Schmidt studied whether consciousness at the level of noticing, or at higher-levels of metalinguistic representation, were necessary for language acquisition. He claims that “while not all learning is deliberate or intentional, all learning requires attention” (1995:1). While child learners pay more attention to meaning than form, and indeed meaning-based instruction has a place in the classroom, the work of Schmidt (1990, 1993, 1994, 1995, 2001, 2012) demonstrates that “not all language features can be acquired successfully when learners' attention is on meaning” (1995:3), leading to Michael Long's distinction between FOCUS ON FORM (metalinguistic representation) and FOCUS ON FORMS (learner's noticing of formal features in the input) (see Long 2000, Sheen 2002, Laufer 2006 for treatments of this distinction. Schmidt interprets psycholinguistic studies as providing evidence for the NOTICING HYPOTHESIS, that only what learners notice in the input becomes intake for learning. Particularly useful to learners was NOTICING THE GAP (Schmidt & Frota 1986, Schmidt 1994) wherein learners consciously attended to differences between their own and native speakers' output. This claim is in explicit
opposition to Krashen's dual system LEARNING-ACQUISITION HYPOTHESIS, whereby second language acquisition is a result of unconscious "acquisition" and not conscious "learning".

Peter Robinson (2006) demonstrates that even from a psychological perspective, noticing is an individual variable, subject to differential aptitude and task conditions, as well as to the affective variables and sociocultural settings which differ for each learner. A learner's sense of learnerhood is relevant then not only in determining what sorts of input a learner will seek out, but also what kinds of input will be paid attention to, noticed, and become intake. In Gass’ Interactionist Hypothesis, an interlanguage grammar does not automatically generate output. Output is only generated when a conversational need arises, and plays the most significant role in interaction when learners have “something to say”. Not only the interlanguage grammar plays a role in constraining output, but also sociocultural beliefs about when to speak, and how to speak. Output is subject to feedback, but as Gass’ work has shown, not all learners pay attention to all forms of feedback. Whether or not the feedback is useful, depends on what learners are expecting to hear, and what kinds of feedback they deem to be important. These factors also proceed from their sense of learnerhood. In summary, in the Interaction Hypothesis, since language acquisition is a function of interaction and negotiation, it necessarily involves both internal beliefs about when and how to seek input and attempt output, their learnerhood, but also sociocultural practices about ways of speaking with non-native speakers and guests in a linguistic community of practice.
3.6.3 Learnerhood in identity-based theories to SLA

Learnerhood is even more directly applicable to Identity-Based Approaches to SLA. In much of Bonnie Norton’s work (Norton-Pierce 1995, Norton 1997, Norton 2008), attention is paid to the sociocultural contexts of language learning. Language learners inhabit roles in the communities where they are learning language, roles which inherently carry a differential power dynamic. Zuengler & Miller (2006) claims it is impossible to study the practices which learners engage in without taking into account these power relations (43). If a learner feels marginalized, disrespected, or is faced with institutional learning practices that they cannot make sense of or want to resist, this can have serious consequences for acquisition, beyond just raising an “affective filter”. Because a learner is not just a language learner, but also inhabits such identity roles as immigrant, refugee, wife, woman, or working-class person, their contributions to conversations may be shut out or devalued, resulting in differential access to input, interaction and feedback. Each of these roles has different “cultural capital” (Norton-Pierce 1995) in a Bourdieusian framework, and thus is linked to a learner’s “entitlement”

The differential access my participants inherently have to the roles of immigrant, American, young person, family man, church leader or friend for example, will affect how their acquisition progresses. Claire Kramsch (1999) applies insights from critical pedagogy, which have been used to explain differential attainment in educational settings, to such instances of differential access to acquisition mechanisms like input and output among language learners. Although learnerhood is a learner-internal construct, because a learner is always tied to an identity in their community of learning, learnerhood is constrained by those identities, yet can also involve challenging or renegotiating the roles
assigned to a learner in the host community (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004). I present a narrative of a Bosnian learner in a cafe in Section 7.5.3 which illustrates such renegotiation.

One aspect of the role of identity in SLA as it relates to learnerhood is the question of when to attempt using the target language versus when to use the L1. Using the indexicalization paradigm (Silverstein 2003, Eckert 2008), studies of multilinguals show that codes have different senses and indexical meanings for the people who use them, apart from purely pragmatic/situational understandings of code choice (Burt 1993, Zentella 2003). Norton-Pierce (1995) emphasized that code choices and decisions to try to put on the second language identity are highly dependent on the immediate social context. Michele Koven (1998) found that Luso-Francophone bilinguals, when context was controlled, actually enact different sorts of selves or identities when speaking in the different codes. This seems to contradict Giles and Johnson’s (1987) suggestion that for adult learners, the addition of a new language in a learner could be a threat to the vitality of first language identities. Aneta Pavlenko and Adrian Blackledge’s (2004) collection contains multiple examples of how bilinguals and language learners report and show evidence of having different representations of the self which map onto the different languages they control. Thomas Ricento (2005) recognizes that second language identities are far more complex than Native Speaker/Non-Native Speaker dichotomies found in much language acquisition research. Michael Schwartz (2006) finds that learners do experience a change in identity while acquiring an L2, but that the “changes in identity are largely individual and cannot be generalized”. Jennifer Miller (2003) also reports ESL-speaking immigrants’ sense of an emergent English self as they attend school in
Australia, a process also observed in Chinese undergraduates who construct a distinct English-language self (Yihong et al. 2005). As Norton & McKinney (2008) notes, much of the work on identity-based factors in SLA is tied to ESL/EFL education, and the identity issues that arise from their choices to learn English, English being the dominant language in the global marketplace. My research fills an important gap by applying insights from identity-based approaches to English speakers learning others’ language in their own spaces.

3.6.4 Learnerhood in sociocultural theories of SLA

In Section 3.5, I noted that sociocultural theories of second language acquisition ascribe the most direct role to language socialization of the various SLA theories. Because socialization, and the sense of self as moving through a cultural space on a historical trajectory, play such a large role, it is not surprising that sociocultural theories of language acquisition (Lantolf 2006), are naturally adapted to the concept of learnerhood. Dwight Atkinson (2011), in elaborating his sociocognitive theory of SLA, notes that “mind, body, and world function together … cognition per se is a fiction, but can be alluded to” (143). Influenced by Vygotsky (1978), Atkinson sees humans as ecological and adaptive. Although cognition plays a central role in these behaviors, language “learning is not a rarefied activity” but one involving “exotic locations (classrooms), done at the behest of special people (teachers), for abstract purposes (education)” (Atkinson 2011:143).

Sociocultural theory, described in detail in Chapter 5, is different from the identity-based approaches to second language acquisition espoused by Norton. Ricento points out that within sociocultural theory, identity is not viewed “as a fixed, invariant
attribute in the ‘mind’ of the individual learner” (2005:895). Identities that are group-based, such as “immigrant” or “woman” or “Muslim” or “American” are eschewed as totalizing and inaccurate. Identity is not preexisting, but contingent, always created within an interaction by “dialectic relations between learners and the various worlds and experiences they inhabit” (Ricento 2005:895). On the one hand, sociocultural theory would be receptive to the construct of learnerhood, as language learning can happen only within the context of interactions at a micro-genetic scale, in a particular time and particular place. A learner’s sense of when and how to participate in such interactions is part of their sociocultural situation, a product of socialization into the “best” way to do language learning. On the other hand, a sociocultural theorist might take issue with my construct of learnerhood, since I have located it “inside” the learner, as a sense of self or identity that pre-exists an interaction. I assume that, by definition, learnerhood consists of the thoughts and beliefs about language learning at a given stage in their development as learners.

Within learnerhood as I conceive of it however, there is room for contingent processes. My view of learnerhood partially overlaps Asif Agha's notion of personhood, an “image … that is performable through a semiotic display or enactment” (2007:177). Despite this shared interest in performance, while Agha focuses on circulating stereotypes, external models of personhood, my conception of learnerhood is more concerned with internal beliefs than with external models. When one of the learners in my study produces a narrative about themselves as a language learner, that narrative is simultaneously a performance, or representation, of a pre-existing conception of
themselves as a language learner. However the telling of a narrative is simultaneously a site wherein that preexisting representation is altered.

Even if I, as an interviewer, gave no feedback at all, the very act of producing the narrative exposes their learnerhood, holds it up for inspection, and probably results in its further formation. Narratives always produce feedback however, and my responses, even non-verbal ones, especially since I am positioned as an “expert” learner, and the responses of others who may overhear such stories, would necessarily adjust the evolving representation of learnerhood. I participate in the collaborative production of language learning ideology (Goodwin & Goodwin 1992, Goodwin 1995). As a construct then, learnerhood is contingently produced, but also can act to constrain language learning actions, such as choosing to watch TV news in the host language, or deciding whether to hire professional language tutor instead of doing a “language exchange” with a host national friend.

3.7 How SLA theory can shape learnerhoods

So far I have been discussing the role that learnerhood does or could play within several SLA theories. The converse of this is also true; SLA theory plays a role in shaping learnerhood as well. Learners, whether they are conscious of it or not, have a working model of how second languages are learned as adults. Theory comes into play to the extent that learners are made aware of the various language acquisition theories, either directly through language acquisition trainings (such as the PILAT and StepOut programs I observe in this study), or indirectly via incidental metalinguistic commentary by language teachers, language coaches, or language helpers. Each learner's understanding of SLA theory, however impartial, becomes a key component of each
learner’s sense of second language learnerhood. None of my participants are a complete blank slate when it comes to language acquisition theory. They all studied a foreign language before, in high school or college, and thus were influenced by the implicit SLA theories assumed by their instructors and instructional materials.

As Norton & Toohey (2004) point out, all classroom practices support a particular social vision, as well as embody a particular approach to language acquisition. Learners’ have a working knowledge of SLA theory, even if they are unaware of the existence of the field of second language acquisition, whether a conscious “folk” knowledge, or knowledge less consciously modeled in instructional settings. However they have encountered it, learners’ limited beliefs about how adults best learn foreign languages will constrain how they structure and make use of interactions and the linguistic environment. Jacob, one of my participants in Slovakia, related in conversation that he does not attempt to read or make use of the Slovak signs around him, choosing to “zone them out”. This is in contrast to my participants in Slovenia, who paid attention to and were able to make sense of the language in written signs, using it as input for language acquisition. This is just one illustration of how learners have differing perceptions of “what am I supposed to be doing as a language learner” rooted in different theories about input. Jacob had been trained to learn the language purely through sociocultural methods focusing on seeking out and recording interactions, whereas the two women serving in Slovenia had relied extensively on grammar books and written materials in their pre-field attempts to learn Slovene. The SLA theories implicit in these instructional methods shaped their behaviors in the field.
3.8 SUMMARY

In conclusion, second language learnerhood is a learner’s internal beliefs about how best to go about learning and using the language of their host culture. Second language learnerhood evolves diachronically, and can only be assessed by taking snapshots of it at a given moment in time. These snapshots involve learner-generated narratives of language learning, both incidental and research-initiated, direct observation of choices related to language learning, actual L2 language behavior in both interactional and instructional settings, and letters written to financial supporters. Learnerhood is a product of socialization, with different actors seeking to shape learners’ sense of learnerhood. Learnerhood is ideologically mediated by prevailing and naturalized theories of language, and the role that language plays in experiencing both one’s own true self and the selves of others (Ochs 2012). Learnerhood is contingent, constantly being revised, as feedback from interactions and observations is processed. Learnerhood can also be polycentric, with different conceptualizations of language learning, each associated with a different center of authority, competing for dominance in structuring a learner’s language-learning behaviors. In Chapter 4, I will situate learnerhood within a transnational assemblage of missions and development, and explore in more detail how Love the World directly and indirectly shapes learners’ sense of themselves as second language learners.
4. LANGUAGE LEARNING IN THE MISSIONS/DEVELOPMENT ASSEMBLAGE

In this chapter I aim to describe the organization Love the World, its internal organization, and how it is connected to other players in the larger network of faith-based missions and development organizations. I will examine the beliefs about and policies regarding second language learning which circulate within the organization. This includes ideologies of language and language learning which originate in twentieth century missiology and in the Toronto Institute of Linguistics. I conclude critically evaluate my own positioning within the assemblage of missions and development workers.

4.1 TRANSNATIONAL ASSEMBLAGES

This study is novel among language socialization studies in that it is not bound to a single geographical place as the unit of analysis. Rather, the basic unit of analysis is the multinational organization itself, kind of global assemblage (Ong & Collier 2005). In Aihwa Ong’s (2007:7) words, an assemblage is “an unstable constellation shaped by interacting global forms and situated political regimes”. Stephen Collier defines an assemblage as “actual configurations through which global forms of techno-science, economic rationalism, and other expert systems gain significance” (2006:400) and function as a tool for production of global knowledge.

Ong applies the concept of assemblage to sites of political mobilization, such as the European Union (Ong 2006), and sites of mobilization of neo-liberal economic ideologies. She argues that assemblages are more relevant than nation-state boundaries, and a more accurate way of identifying the spatial character of human activities. An Ethiopian family in Queens might have more interactions with and influence from the
Ethiopian community in Washington D.C. than the neighboring ethnic communities, and potentially more than Addis Ababa. Such diasporas are an obvious example of an assemblage, wherein the ‘nodes’, in this case dispersed Ethiopian communities connected via social media, business and personal contacts, creates a more meaningful geographical unit of analysis than the local zip code, county, or even nation state.

NGOs and other transnational organizations like Love the World, Médecins Sans Frontières, Reuters, or the Roman Catholic Church are best analyzed in terms of assemblages. Transnational organizations also consist of nested and geographically dispersed nodes, with such a high density of flows of information and interaction that they function much like a unitary “village” despite their translocal character. Steve Sweatman, the director of MTI, an umbrella organization that resources over 300 faith-based NGOs even used the term “diaspora” to describe the mobilization of Christian workers, explicitly linking it to an assemblage. Especially with the rise of high-speed internet and satellite connections, Love the World workers in Rome and Budapest can have more connection with each other via Facebook, texting, email and Skype, than with their literal host national neighbors, or even with expats from other organizations who live in the same neighborhood. In highly active assemblages then, locality is measured less in distance than in density of information flow along particular pathways.

Assemblages do not just contain the flow of information or economic resources, but also ideologies and moralities. Scheper-Hughes (2005) and Cohen (2005) show how communities, families and governments resist the flow of human organs across the assemblage of organ donors and brokers. An alternate assemblage of actors emerges as a result of debate and introspection, to oppose the assemblage of organ trafficking.
Evangelicalism in Eastern Europe is just such an assemblage, wherein not only financial resources move, but also ideological and moral resources, and which emerges partially as a counter-assemblage to pre-existing regional assemblages, such as Catholicism, Islam, communism, and capitalism.

4.1.1 The assemblage of world Evangelicalism

Christine Schwarz (2003), in her study of evangelical organizational networks in Eastern Europe defines evangelical organizations as characterized by six emphases: 1) supreme authority of the Bible, 2) the transcendence of God, 3) the pervasiveness of sin, 4) the uniqueness of Jesus Christ, 5) the free gift of salvation and 6) inward religion. While all Christian traditions ascribe to at least some of these points, adherence to all six is necessary for full participation in the evangelical network. While works such as Connolly (2005:869) go beyond theological analysis, and posit an assemblage of “cowboy capitalism and evangelical Christianity” in America, David Boje’s review (2009) problematizes this approach, arguing that evangelicalism is a theological construct, and not synonymous with neoliberal economics nor political conservatism, and not even explicitly American.

Evangelical networks extend far beyond America, and while America hosts several influential nodes, financial resources, ideologies, missions personnel, and evangelical media originate in many countries of the world; South Korea, Germany, South Africa, India, China, Mexico, and Brazil among others, host many evangelical agencies, strong networks of local churches, media outlets, and influential writers and leaders. Evangelicalism’s nodes consist of local congregations, organized into global denominational networks, such as the Southern Baptist Convention, or independent yet
connected by church planting and resourcing agencies such as the Acts 29 network. Seminaries which train evangelical pastors are highly networked, involving fluidity and exchange of professors and students among key evangelical seminaries around the world. Sites such as the Urbana Conference, held every three years, the Conferences on World Evangelization organized by the Lausanne movement bring together evangelical leaders from every denomination and nationality to shape the future of evangelicalism and address its challenges.

So-called “parachurch organizations” (White 2007) the preferred evangelical term for NGOs (of which Love the World is an example) connect local congregations to every kind of resource from environmental activism to care for orphans to landmine removal to Bible study training, and house much of the mission and development work initiated within Evangelicaldom. More connections are forged through blogs, online training courses, media which distribute the ideas of contemporary thinkers such as C.S. Lewis, Ravi Zacharias, John Piper as well as interpretations of the meaning and practical applications of Christian scriptures. While there is certainly much dissonance and many conflicting currents within this assemblage, these evangelical nodes are in many cases more connected to each other than to nodes of “mainline” Christianity within their local and national contexts, or within their own denominations (Rhodes 2012).

Evangelicalism as a widespread if at times loosely-knit assemblage does constrain in some ways the forms that second language learnerhood can take. In evangelical conceptions, what is at stake in discussions of multilingualism, language survival and language revitalization is not “ways of speaking” but a reified “language” (Samuels 2006). Rooted in the Bible’s mention of tongues as an organizing category for humanity,
the naming and counting of languages has been a primary task of evangelicalism, often carried out through Wycliffe Bible Translators, and its affiliated linguistic research arm, the Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL). The vision of believers from “every tongue, tribe, and nation” is a dominating trope within evangelicalism, finding expression in the “people group” theory of missions (Winter & Hawthorne 1992), and projects such as SIL’s Ethnologue (www.ethnologue.com), which purport to document, to the extent it is possible all of the “languages” on earth. This reification of languages, treating them as bounded, stable objects (Blommaert 2010) is a hallmark of modernity. DeCosta (2010) criticizes this “structuralist view of language as conceptualized by Saussure, that has caused languages not only to be viewed as separate and enumerable, but also as being divorced from social contexts of interaction. This view of languages as fixed and discernible entities, propagated by the work of SIL and Bible translators (such as the ideologies about Guhu-Samane documented and contested by Handman 2007, 2010) still characterizes the predominant discourses on language, and the ways that “language” acquisition is framed.

Such reification is not unique to evangelicalism; products such as Rosetta Stone and university language departments instantiate the same emphasis on “languages” rather than “ways of being through words”. Ricento (2005) finds identity-based research in SLA suggests that failure to achieve ultimately in a second language is an issue arising from the imposition of the third-person objectivist perspective, informed by a particular linguistic ideology based on the NS (native speaker)/NNS (non-native speaker) dichotomy. The “people group” and “language counting” tendencies within evangelicalism reinforce the dichotomy between the insider/host/NS and the
outsider/guest/NNS. “Translanguaging” (Cenoz & Gorter 2011) and approaches to language that emphasize border crossing, individual identities and mixed repertoires do not fit easily into the evangelical view of language, based as it is around literacy in a fixed text, the Bible, which has been rendered in a standardized and “pure” form (Samuel 2006). Greg Thomson’s Growing Participator Approach (GPA), described in detail in Chapter 5, rooted in sociocultural theory, challenges this model of language and literacy in some key ways.

4.1.2 Love the World and its role within the assemblage of evangelicalism

Schwarz notes that the “seriousness of the religious faith of people in (faith-based organizations) means that it becomes a dimension of organizational culture in its own right. Religious non-profit organizations vary significantly from other nonprofits” (2003:79). Other NGO’s may be “nested” within assemblages such as American diplomatic circles, or the environmental movement. Organizations like Love the World are nested within the relatively unified assemblage of evangelicalism, one which by definition is concerned with orthodoxy, and with generating centripetal forces to unite evangelicals which counteract the centrifugal forces that push to restructure evangelical institutions in the likeness of non-faith-based counterparts.

As a sub-assemblage within the assemblage of evangelicalism, Love the World has a more unified identity by virtue of involving fewer actors. Because it is an organization gathered under a global leadership, with theological statements embraced across the organization, common institutional values, a shared history, a constellation of web resources which contain organizational beliefs, and a worldwide system of theological and practical training for its personnel, Love the World has a relatively high
density of interactional and informational connections, and can be seen as a more tightly bound assemblage than evangelicalism as a whole.

Yet Love the World is also not an island, and is very connected to other nodes within evangelicalism at several levels. It’s global headquarters are located in an area where many other “parachurch” organization, faith based missions and development groups, are located. The leaders of many other subassemblages, such as Wycliffe Bible Translators, Passion, New Tribes and Pioneers express endorsement and solidarity of Love the World’s work on its website. This leverages these organizations’ authority to create more authority and negotiate greater access to other nodes of evangelicalism. Its personnel and leaders have attended many seminaries that function as key connecting points for evangelical leaders. As an organization known for working with university students, Love the World seeks connections at every field site with local congregations, as well as with other organizations that seek to raise the profile of Christianity on university campuses.

4.2 LOVE THE WORLD AS AN ASSEMBLAGE

Love the World is in some respects a typically Evangelical missions and development agency. This limits the applicability of findings to other transnational non-governmental organizations, who may be of a different religious affiliation (i.e. Catholic or Muslim), or have no religious affiliation at all. Evangelical organizations morally load language learning with the imperatives of service, humility and love in unique ways, and so the moral consequences of success and failure may be less pronounced in other organizations. The Evangelical faith of these workers affects their motives for language learning, and makes language learning crucial to their sense of self-success than may be
true of workers in other kinds of organizations. Other organizations may adopt conceptions of language learning that deal less with individual motives, and more with psychological/developmental models. Even among evangelical organizations, Love the World has a reputation for rigidity and methodological discipline, yet a very expansive and distributed structure, as compared to other similar organizations. These characteristics affect the role that the organization is able to have in shaping second language learnerhood, as will be discussed in far greater detail in Chapters 7, 8 and 9.

In a way, faith-based missions and development organizations are Frankenstinian mixtures, combining several potential discordant elements. There are many types of involvement in the organization, many reasons for being involved in the organization, and many consequences. The organizations seek simultaneously to have a recognizable global brand within evangelicalism, and also to be so local and “indigenous” that host nationals can remain unaware that there is even a global network involved at all. Christianity has long mixed development projects aimed at alleviating human suffering and injustice, with spiritual motives, aimed at socializing participants into theological truths. Love the World reflects this. In this section, I will discuss its history, constituency and common trajectories through the organization.

4.2.1 History and Purpose

Love the World has a high degree of name recognition in the evangelical world, as it has been operating for over fifty years. It is one of the largest faith-based, or parachurch, organizations, with over 25,000 field workers in over 180 countries. While it is known for its work with university campuses, it has also been involved in many types of projects: translating and distributing Christian media, marriage and family ministries,
workplace and professional ministries, equipping Christian academics and professors, athletes and soldiers in the Christian faith, assisting refugees, engaging in food and development aid, and supporting church planting, among others. The stated vision of the organization is that everyone in the world would know someone who is a follower of Christ, and speaks in terms of “spiritual movements”. The value statements displayed prominently in the organization’s Eastern European headquarters read thus:

1. Leading from Core Values: Depending on God in faith, growing character and leadership, bearing lasting fruit

2. Learning Environment: Always learning, not bound by past success, connecting with our changing culture, always ready to take risks

3. Kingdom Perspective: Synergy with the body, joining with like-minded partners, sharing our vision, resources and networks.

4. Shared Leadership: Empowered supportive leadership teams, expanding leadership base at every level, team members sharing responsibility for ministry results.

5. Local Ownership: Disciple-led strategies: Focused on multiplication at the field level, disciples empowered to lead, self-sustaining local movements. (Figure 4.1)

Several of these values have implications for learnerhood. Value point 3 speaks to the assemblage nature of Love the World, and its connections via local nodes to other subassemblages within evangelicalism. Engaging “like-minded partners” to build connections between nodes necessarily requires cross-cultural communication at local points of contact. The emphasis on risk-taking in point 2 and shared responsibility in point 4 is reminiscent of “Organization Banks” practices in Michel & Wortham (2009), discussed in detail in Section 7.1, but Love the World lacks much of the leverage over its employees’ life experience to force a cathartic adoption of these practices. Point 5, “Local Ownership” depicted in the banner shown in Figure 4.1 probably has the most
direct impact on learnerhood, calling as it does for “indigenization” of ministry (see Section 4.3.2).

Figure 4.1: Large banner showing ideology of Local Ownership

4.2.2 Constituency

To preserve the anonymity of the organization, I have to be somewhat vague regarding its internal constituency. The organization was founded in, and has headquarters in the United States. Its work soon spread to other countries, and South Korea is a notable center of its activities as well, and a major contributor of International Staff. In some sites I visited, field workers from Korea and from the United States work in the same city, although often on separate projects, with field workers from other sites such as Albania, Russia or the Netherlands usually working closely alongside the Americans. A 2007 mobilization conference in South Korea, which I attended, drew over 20,000 participants from over 100 nations, only 20% of who were Americans.
Nevertheless, the organization remains overwhelmingly American, both in percentage of field workers, local sites, and organizational culture. Certainly many of these terms are difficult to translate accurately into the Slavic languages, and all materials referencing these values display them in English, although other language materials are used in a symbolic way to index multilingualism.

Under the global headquarters in the United States, headed by a president and Board of Trustees, are 13 regional headquarters all across the globe, with several each in the Americas, Africa, Asia, Oceania, and the two headquarters which are most relevant for my study- Western Europe and Eastern Europe. The Western European region contains my field sites in Sweden, Italy and Germany. There is no physical headquarters for Western Europe, as the regional leadership is dispersed among several field sites, and convenes electronically. Eastern Europe has a physical headquarters in Budapest, Hungary, a city where many NGOs and faith-based organizations which operate in the former Communist sphere of influence have their headquarters. Even before communism fell, Hungary was the first country that many of these organizations had access to, and in a time of uncertainty over the future of Eastern Europe, the relative proximity of Budapest to Vienna, and relative hostility of Hungarians towards the Soviet Union made it an attractive base of operations. While field workers at the regional headquarters usually worked in a national site before being promoted 40 of the 58 mailboxes at the regional headquarters displayed names that were clearly English in origin, based on first and last name, and English is unquestionably the lingua franca of regional operations. As Jan Blommaert notes, globalization brings “new and complex markets for linguistic and communicative resources. Such markets include winners and losers, and many people
find their linguistic resources to be of very low value in globalized environments” (2010:3).

The organization runs along nation-state lines, with the national level being the next level of operations. It varies from nation to nation whether the operations are run by Americans or host nationals. Poland, Macedonia, Moldova, Bulgaria, Romania and Ukraine are run entirely by host nationals. In the former Yugoslavia the national leadership is transitioning from American to Croatian hands, while in Slovakia the national director is still American while the majority of field workers are Slovak. In Italy and Hungary there is a host national director but the field workers are largely American. There is tension in Hungary between the national field workers, which is more Hungarian in nature and the regional staff, which is very American, even though they are housed in the same location. Many national headquarters oversee operations in several cities. There are 5 sites under the national office in Zagreb for example, and 4 under the national office in Italy.

4.2.3 Common trajectories

Universities play a key role in the trajectories of workers in Love the World. It has a presence on many campuses in the United States, as one of its primary roles is to increase the profile of Christianity on college campuses and connect Christian students to each other. Faith-based organizations on campuses run in a parallel world to the academic activities at a university, with limited direct connection between the faculty and administration and the operations of these student organizations, which often meet in smaller groups in dormitories and a larger weekly meeting in a college lecture hall. The organization taps into university’s values of service-learning, study-abroad, diversity and
international travel to offer short term overseas experiences, for which the students raise their own financial support. These consist of one-week spring break or six-week summer “projects” where students meet longer term Love the World field workers, engage in sightseeing and “vision” activities, and help in various projects around the city. The aim is for these students to come back for a longer one- to two-year internship, which I will refer to as Sprint. The Sprint program is similar to service-learning and study-abroad opportunities, which may be collectively described as “student development tourism”, (linked to Chambers’ (1983) notion of “development tourism”) dovetailing with universities’ prerogative to incorporate intentional international experiences into the overall development of students’ sense of global citizenship (Hudgins 2010). Hefferan (2007), Hefferan et al. (2009) and Hefferan & Fogarty (2010) also discuss how faith-based development initiatives provide a platform for citizen-to-citizen networking.

“Sprinters” also raise their own and often considerable financial support to spend a year or two living in the field sites. They are expected to take more initiative in starting projects and building relationships within the city. These Sprinters serve on a team of 3-9 people usually; host the spring and summer break projects, and are mentored by the longer-term field workers. When Love the World wants to start operations in a new city, they send a team of these “Sprinters” first to “pioneer” a site, making connections with local Christian communities (if they exist) and scouting out possibilities for future projects, reporting on the best use of resources. Due to the short term nature of their stay Sprinters are not necessarily encouraged to learn the local language, an issue which I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter 8.
After one year of Sprint, these young people are encouraged to sign up for a second year at a mid-year retreat in a different country. Second year Sprinters then act as a team leader for the larger group of first-year Sprinters who will be sent to the site the following year. It is hoped that some of the one- or two-year Sprinters will then decide to come back to their field sites, or a related site, long-term. First, they must go back to the United States until they can collect the ongoing financial support to live long term in the host country, an amount which varies from 25,000$–50,000$ a year. This “support raising” time can take up to two years, introducing a discontinuity between their experience as Sprinters and their returning to the country long-term. The fact that these workers have to gather such financing, living off nothing for a couple years while they do so, throws into relief one area where these migrants differ from many of the migrants discussed in the sociolinguistic or anthropological literature. These migrants are moving not to accumulate money in the host country to send back home as remittance, but rather, they are spending money, painstakingly fund-raised in the United States, on their personal expenses in the host country. There is also no financial “return on investment” for the individuals who choose to support these workers, unless it is a spiritual or moral return. The economic model within this enterprise is unusual, and is sustainable only because moral economies, in addition to financial economies, are evolved. Donors receive moral value-added by supporting these Love the World field workers, and as a consequence, field workers are expected to demonstrate to their donor base that they are being spiritually effective. This pressure to “perform” for donors also has significant ramifications for second language learnerhood, which will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 8.
After deciding to serve long-term, if enough of the “support raising” has been finished, these young people are sent to a six-week training program to prepare them for international life, which I will call StepOut. This program covers many areas of adjustment to cross-cultural living, including finances, emotional health, team and family dynamics, spiritual development, and crucially, language acquisition. StepOut is a unique educational environment, as participants are taught not a language, but what language learning means. As Block & Cameron note, “Globalization changes the conditions under which language learning takes place by commodifying languages and creating new literacies required by the workplace that schools are expected to teach” (2002:5). Participants are asked to abandon the ways that schools and universities have taught them to commodify languages, and learn a new form of commodification- language as moral capital, a particular twist on valuing intangible assets like brands or designs. The entire StepOut program socializes participants into a new way of experiencing globalization, as migrants with an explicitly moral mission, rather than as Western tourists or international consumers.

If a participant completes the StepOut program, and has finished “support raising” they can then move to their field sites as “International Staff” and begin engaging in project work, and starting language learning in earnest. Duties vary widely, dependent on the priorities of each national headquarters, but common activities seem to be: mentoring any Sprinters who may be serving in the same city, networking among local Christian communities, establishing a club or student organization at a university campus which can serve as a nucleus for an emergent community of Christians, engaging in development and relief projects both in their own right, and as a way of enlisting students
and collaborating with local churchgoers, teaching English, and most relevant for the present study, “doing language” (as the participants themselves call it).

An organization like Love the World contains competing interests, and parts moving in opposite directions. Sprint and International Staff are run by completely different departments of the organization, despite their obvious connection. The International Staff program is older, and the Sprint program emerged as a way of generating interest and grooming candidates for becoming International Staff. However, because Sprint is connected with university students from North America, it is overseen by the office in charge of North American students, while the International Staff program is overseen primarily by the regional staff of each of the world’s regions, with a loose collection of other actors, all of who have other primary roles in the organization, brought together to coordinated the StepOut training program. In order to maximize participation in Sprint programs, those in charge of that program consciously downplay the importance of language learning, advertising places like Slovenia, as “a place you can go where you do not have to learn a language because everyone speaks English”. This statement was used to recruit the Sprint team I spent time with in Ljubljana. Such recruiting tactics are similar to those used for other “student development tourism” projects such as alternative spring breaks or certain study-abroad experiences (Hudgins 2010). The statement “everyone speaks English” ignores the existence of multiple and truncated repertoires (Blommaert 2010), since most Ljubljanaans can do some things in English, but certainly not everything (including having spiritual conversations). It also directly counteracts the attitude of the International Staff program. International Staff in my interviews felt that Sprinters who learned the host language would be more likely to choose to commit to
living there long term, and would have a large head start in “indigenizing” the local ministry. Maximizing Sprint participation may also end up adversely affecting the access to input among International Staff, involving them in “babysitting” monolingual American Sprinters during the seasons they are supposed to be concentrating on language learning. Pete, a sprinter in Italy, says:

Another thing that holds us back is us, is me as an intern. People of my position, we come in and the teams have to- you just wouldn’t be loving your team well if you just went to the campus and you did it all in Italian and you let your new Sprinter sit there, not understanding a word. So in order to help train and to start, [the International Staff] are going to find people who speak English.... That’s just how it is. [The team is] so used to training new people who do not know the language, that it just keeps us out of the language in order to do ministry. (Pete, Italy, field interview 2012)

This kind of contradictory policy making may be more typical for these kinds of missions/development organizations, which are more decentralized and contain many resources, human and ideological, which move at different time scales.

While moving directly from Sprint to International Staff is the canonical trajectory, several other variations can happen. Some Love the World field workers have worked full-time for several years in the United States before deciding to serve overseas. There are even individuals who had no prior affiliation with Love the World who decided to join and begin the support raising process without ever having gone on Sprint, or participated in the university movements as a student. Several of my participants “married” into the organization, and moved to a field site along with their spouse, who had already done a Sprint internship, and decided to move overseas. Several of the American field workers I met in Eastern Europe married local field workers, and are invested more long term in their spouse’s country of origin.
Planned length of stay can vary. A general trend within the evangelical missions and development field is that individuals want to go for shorter lengths of times, and have a clear project and goal in mind before setting out. While in the 19th century the norm for missionaries was to move to a site and never return, most young people joining such organizations today will not commit to more than five years (Steve Sweatman, personal communication). Most of the newly positioned “International Staff” who form my core participants for this study also had the five-year horizon in mind when asked how long they planned to stay at their field site. Interestingly, both in the regional office in Budapest, and at other sites around Eastern Europe, I met a surprisingly large cohort of workers who arrived in Eastern Europe after communism fell in 1990-1992, and have remained in the region ever since. For those young people who joined staff in the early 1990’s there seems to be a demonstrable long-term mentality, which was absent in the cohorts who joined in 2010 and 2011, although I had no occasion to meet field workers who may have arrived in the early 1990’s and then returned home after three to five years of service.

4.2.4 How Love the World is characterized in discourse

In order to understand Love the World’s role as an agent of socialization into second language learnerhood, it is important to analyze how the organization itself is characterized in discourse and narratives. Official policies and goals drawn up by the organization often do not match the perceived policies and goals as judged by other actors, both inside and outside the organization.

My participants see themselves as being very much tied to Love the World as an organization, rather than being isolated at a specific site, and left to “go local”. When
asked what practices tied them to the organization as a whole, the most frequently cited activity was mid-year conferences. Every year all European field workers were gathered in a Mediterranean country for a week to hear stories, socialize, get vision from organization representatives, and compare ideas in informal workshops and social settings. Other conferences for specific issues come up, such as one bringing all Western European field workers to Estonia for a week-long conference in conjunction with a national celebration of Christian heritage, with the aim of launching new field sites in Estonia. Such conferences build solidarity and a sense of being “soldiers fighting along different fronts” as one worker put it. All International Staff have to complete a certain number of seminary classes every two years, which bring field workers from many countries together for a two-week long intensive instructional setting, often at the regional headquarters.

At the StepOut program, connections are made with field workers heading to all countries of the world that year. These often develop into lasting friendships, with members of different teams visiting each other as their vacations. In my fieldwork, I personally observed field workers from Tunisia visiting Sweden, field workers from Italy and Slovenia visiting each other, field workers from Slovakia visiting Hungary, and know that field workers have travelled as far as Thailand and China to visit friends made in their StepOut cohort. My participants also mention that Love the World has a common vocabulary, a common way of talking and thinking about Christianity, which binds them to the organization. Even when they are active participants in a local evangelical congregation, their identity as members of that organization, is foregrounded, as much of their work, all of their financial support, and many of their ways of describing and
experiencing the Christian faith are linked to the organization, learned throughout the years of participation in it, often going back to their freshman years at U.S. universities.

Despite this strong identification, these field workers are also able to look at Love the World through “outside” eyes, via their interactions with workers from other organizations at their field sites. David, a field workers member in Germany notes that Love the World is “one of the worst” organizations at language learning, as “they only care if you are trying” and “believe in a high degree of personal responsibility” and so it does not want to organize things like language learning for people. The Sprinters I talked to in Slovenia, Sweden and Italy all commented on this point. They said that the organization was very concerned about their emotional health, perhaps overly so, always taking them away on conferences and retreats, so it was hard to get work done. Stephen, a Sprinter who had decided to return for a second year in Slovenia said “They’re constantly encouraging us, they maybe tried to do a little bit too much. They do not push us into the deep end”. This relaxed attitude was appreciated by Mark, a field worker learning Serbo-Croatian, “I appreciate the freedom that we got to have (from the organization as regards language learning), but I’m generally internally-driven so I do not need a lot of external support”. His wife Theresa, contrasting Love the World with the policies of another organization also appreciated the relaxed attitude.

[Other organization], like they’re hard-core. My sweet friend, she moved here, she had a four-month-old and a two-year-old, and she was forced to get a babysitter for 30 hours a week, and she had to study study study study you know? And whereas like with Love the World they are so flex with that! I like that because I was able to really incorporate [language learning] with what do I like to do and you know like what can work for me. (Theresa, Bosnia, field interview, 2012)
Diane, a field worker in Italy, picking up a similar theme, confided in me, “We (Love the World) say language is primary but it is actually secondary”. Despite the lack of “hardcoreness” as regards language learning, I heard several comments saying that Love the World is actually quite hard core as regards the pace and temperament of its staff. Mark in another conversation compared the organization to “the Green Beret version of the military administration- like we want to be able to get the phone call and be where we need to be overnight so that we can get the job done quickly”. Diane also felt that “everybody is pretty achievement-oriented, performance-driven. It is almost a competition”. Yet in contrast to views that Love the World is soft on language, she adds “The drivenness, and performance-orientedness of everything, the way they pursue ministry, that’s also how they pursue language”. She is also self-admittedly a slow learner, and felt marginalized by teammates who flaunted their language proficiency.

If these comments reflect how Love the World is positioned by its own staff in comparison with other organizations, it is interesting to contrast the perception of Love the World by staff in those other organizations. Personnel at MTI characterized Love the World as reaching just the “fringes of society”, and not the core, probably a reference to its work among students and the academic population. Love the World was also characterized as having staff with a strong “academic bias” (i.e. a preference for classroom-based, teacher-driven approaches) in their own beliefs about language learning. Another experienced counselor in the missions and development world noted that Love the World staff are very goal-driven and strong-willed on the whole, a sentiment I heard echoing Diane’s sentiment that Type A personalities are rewarded.
Another common criticism of Love the World is that despite its goal of working with “like-minded partners”, it remains disconnected from local churches. A worker in Budapest muses, “they’re strong but disconnected, I do not imagine they’re doing ministry in Hungarian, probably a lot of English”. To this his wife added, “These parachurches do good work, but it does not require the local language. It’s worthwhile, but not what they often intended at first, and they end up living in a Christian ex-pat bubble”.

4.3 ORGANIZATIONAL VALUES RELATED TO SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERHOOD

Several of the organization’s key values, whether self-ascribed as a result of official policy decisions, or organically negotiated through the interactions within the organizations assemblage have a direct bearing on second language learnerhood as it will be discussed in Chapters 6-8.

4.3.1 Focus on urban students

Because a primary focus of Love the World’s work is with universities, questions of center-periphery get evoked (Blommaert et al. 2005, Dong and Blommaert 2009). Universities, particularly in Eastern European nations, tend to be concentrated in urban centers, and often the first site that Love the World opens in a country is in the national capital. Capitals are not only likely to have the largest university population, they are also likely, due to diplomatic communities and foreign influence, to have the most well-established evangelical communities, and the most opportunities for service with the poor, marginalized or refugees. There are a couple different kinds of center-periphery relations at play. First, the dialect of the language my participants encounter tends to be the standard form which is spoken in the capital, and which forms the pillar of many nation-
building projects (Anderson 1991). The capital is central linguistically in the sense that students from outlying areas are also asked to accommodate linguistically, and step into a “national” dialect, which may not be their native dialect. A student from Tuzla finds his dialect marked in Sarajevo, just as a student from Maribor finds her dialect marked in Ljubljana. The main exceptions to this in my data are Rome and Berlin, which, despite being capitals, are not the linguistic model for Germany and Italy (Hanover and Florence, respectively). Even in these cities, as national-level universities draw students from many dialect areas, the language heard at Humboldt University in Berlin or La Sapienza in Rome is likely to be closer to the national standard than the language heard in the streets next door. Evangelical communities too tend to bring in people from diverse communities, often including immigrant communities, and so the “national” standard language is usually employed in evangelical churches.

Another example of “centerness” is that the university students tend to represent the unmarked “style” of speaking (cf. Labov 1966). Working-class speech has long been associated with non-standard speech, whereas upper-middle-class speech, the class most represented in the university system, is more likely to be selected for inclusion with the range of “standard” repertoires. In this sense the student is more likely to speak in a way more “central” to the nation-building project, than the more “peripheral” speech of the tramway driver. A possible exception to this would be the so-called “Bosnian language”, for which the national standard was based around more rural versions of Serbo-Croatian, in order to comb a distinctly Bosnian repertoire away from the “Serb” or “Croat” ways of using the language.
Capitals are also central in that they serve as the first “landing place” for globally-scaled forms. A capital city like Budapest exists in many different scales (Blommaert 2010). It is a local place, with local neighborhoods and a way of talking which would mark a Hungarian as being distinctly “Budapest”. Budapest is also a very national city. The national organizations of Hungary are housed there, and it represents that national level institutions and ideologies of the nation state. The Hungarian language itself is more associated with Budapest than with any other city in the imagination of Europeans. This is in a way ironic, because Budapest has the highest density of English proficiency in Hungary as well; it is not just a national city, it is a “great European city” (as often emphasized in travel literature). As such, it houses European-level institutions; its citizens are European actors, feeling more on a par with Vienna or Prague than with Miskolc or Székesfehérvár. Budapest is where the European scale, indexicalized with English, most firmly “touches” the national space of Hungary. A citizen of Budapest can speak as a national-level actor in Hungarian, or as a regional-level actor in English. This ability to lay claim to different scales, which is a kind of polycentricity (Blommaert 2007b), becomes crucial in setting the language choices when field workers speak with host nationals.

4.3.2 Concern for indigenization

As illustrated in Figure 4.1, a key organizational value is “Local Ownership”. The field workers in Love the World often express this in terms of “indigenization” perhaps unconsciously borrowing a metaphor from earlier forms of missionization, toward the otherized “indigenous natives”. Darren, serving in Country W, launches his account of what is at stake in learning the language well by using the simple present in “if’ clauses
as an interactional evidential of epistemic certainty. Rather than using “would” or other modals of uncertainty, Darren paints a certain and definite future if language learning fails (lines 2-5). The speech is confident, fast, and contains almost no pausing.

1. one big thing is that
2. my role will be extremely limited if I don’t
3. I don’t learn [language W]
4. I cannot ever
5. train up like a new leader
6. really f...fully
7. until I know [language W]
8. ‘til I’m able to communicate in their heart language
9. or language that is pretty close to their heart
(Darren, Country W, StepOut 2010)

Immediately following this sequence, Darren shows less certainty when describing how a hypothetical failure to acquire the language would affect his team’s indigeneity (lines 11,15). This hesitance to venture out into an imagined world of failure and “non-indigeneity” is marked by greater use of hypotheticals (lines 12, 20-22, 25-27), hedges (lines 17, 28), probability judgments, a slower more thoughtful rate of speech, and increased pausing.

10. and our
11. ministry is not going to be indigenized
12. if we’re constantly using English, we’re going to be limited
13. I think it’s critical
14. for the ministry to grow
15. to be become indigenous really.
16. and yeah
17. we’ll kind of be stuck sending people
18. that only speak English
19. year after year
20. if
21. if we don’t
22. if we don’t learn Russian well,
23. so it’s
(pause)
24. in order to get to the next step
25. which would be to have nationals being able to take over a particular (pause)
26. you’d have to have an American who **could** speak Russian
27. and as a team **would** go
(pause)
28. **hopefully** all the meetings in Russian,
29. everything in Russian.
(Darren, Country W, StepOut 2010)

The goal of achieving indigeneity (cf. Merlan 2009) seems to be happen on two levels, both related to the raising up of “national leaders”. On the one hand indigeneity is facilitated if the Americans, so long as they are on the scene, remain unnoticed, “going indigenous”, so that Love the World “feels” like a Swedish or Slovene ministry. Another level of indigeneity seems to have been achieved in Macedonia and Romania, where host nationals run the entire national organization now, and even short-term summer teams from America never come.

The national director of Sweden expressed concern to me that the Swedish movement did not feel very indigenous, but rather very American. I attended one party with the Swedish team, where the film *Captain America* was being screened eight Americans were talking fast in English, using lots of American slang, and one bemused Swedish girl was there delighting in this cross-cultural experience in her own backyard.

These are the situations that belie indigeneity, and ironically the more Sprinters’ language learning is downplayed, the more likely a group of young monolingual Americans is to “taint” the indigeneity of Love the World with the real feel of foreignness. Ironically, it is precisely the non-indigeneity which is often a draw, as students are keen to practice English with American “native speakers”.

**4.3.3 Ministry in the “heart language”**

Out of the Toronto Institute of Linguistics, which is described in the next section, comes the notion of “heart language” popularized by Tom and Betty Sue Brewster in the
article entitled *Language Learning is Communication is Ministry* (Brewster & Brewster 1997), a reading which is central to the language acquisition training and perspective within Love the World. “Heart language” also competes with “host language” as the preferred way of expressing target language within the Growing Participator Approach. The notion of a “language of the heart” which God speaks is much older however, and underpins Bible translation efforts going all the way back to the Latin Vulgate, even though the metaphor is not explicitly Biblical. If language resides in the “heart” of host nationals, once the learner has access to language proficiency, he/she then gains immediate access to the heart, the seat of relational intimacy. In addition to the mention of “heart language” in Darren’s comment above, Kathleen, serving in Italy uses heart language this way (line 3).

1. It’s just so much more
2. Important to talk in
3. Their **heart language**?
4. And um to be explaining spiritual things in Italian
   (Kathleen, Italy, StepOut 2010)

And later,

11. Eventually I want to say
12. Like your language is important to me
13. Your culture is important to me
14. You’re important to me
15. And I want to learn about you,
16. I think that’s the point where you go
17. Let’s go deeper and let’s speak in your language
   (Kathleen, Italy, StepOut 2010)

In this extract, Kathleen notes that an interest in language shows an interest in culture, which shows a personal interest (lines 15, 17) The equation of language, culture and peoples’ souls (lines 12, 13, 14) is a hallmark of the nationalistic imagination (Anderson 1991) and underlies the “people group” ideology which dominated Christian missiology
in the 20th century (Winter et al. 1992). The real treasures of “deeper” lie in Italian, “your language” (line 17), the language of the heart (line 3).

Theresa also comments on how “amazing it was” to be able to communicate with a very English-proficient Serbo-Croatian speaking friend in her heart language, that this opened up a whole new “depth of her soul”. This is clear evidence of socialization, as this term was frequently used during their StepOut training, and the participants seem to have learned this word, and this way of thinking about the target language of their acquisition efforts. This mapping of language proficiency to access to inner worlds was pointed out to me by the director of a pre-field language acquisition training program, and linked to the evangelical notion of worldview as explained by Kwast (1981), and expressed in Figure 4.2 below.

![Fluency vs Worldview](image)

**Figure 4.2**: Levels of fluency permit access to deeper levels of worldview.
Limited fluency allows access to only the outermost realm of worldview, discussing behavior. A field worker, could with limited fluency, theoretically help a host national modify behavior, but nothing deeper. As fluency increases, and a learner is able to talk about more of the world, the learner gains access to ever deeper levels of worldview. As the learner approaches the “heart” of a host national, they are able to discuss topics such as the fundamental nature of reality and truth, topics which are central to spiritual experience, and lie close to the level of the heart. Courtney Handman (2007) demonstrated how similar mappings were explicitly used by Bible translators in Papua New Guinea to gain authenticity for translations, and to “speak to the soul” of missionized subjects.

E. Summerson Carr (2010) notes the American preoccupation with the “ideology of inner reference”, evaluating a speaker’s “integrity and health by determining if his or her world correspond with what he or she already ‘truly’ thinks or feels” (4). This ideology maps onto the heart language; by locating the mother tongue in a speaker’s core (Figure 4.2), it is only in that language then that a person can articulate what they “already truly think or feel”. For someone to talk about their inner self not in their heart language, would, in this ideology cause their integrity to come into question. “Heart language” ideology is also congruent with the ideology of “inner reference” by presupposing that “fully formed selves exist prior to speech acts” and that “a person’s words should be valued primarily as signs of selfhood. Language is a window to the psyche, if not the soul” (Carr 2010:218).

Crucially the “heart language” ideology is not just about the most authentic language of individual people, but also about the most authentic language of a people.
Woolard & Schieffelin (1994:61) point out however that this equation of one language and one people is rooted in a “Western insistence on the authenticity and moral significance of the mother tongue”. Authenticity and morality are at stake in two ways then in heart language acquisition. On the one hand, the extracts presented at the beginning of this section reveal field worker’s belief that authentic and morally altruistic interpersonal relationships are only possible when speaking the heart language. Also at stake is a relationship with the host nation, a re-scaling oneself from being American, or a transnational global agent, to being an authentic “legitimate participant” in the host nation, achieving a kind of honorary citizenship. Such honorary or legitimized citizenship, operationalized by the GPA as “grown participation”, is the moral imperative of host workers. In classical missionary biographies, figures such as Charles Frasier or Hudson Taylor are almost heroically positioned as an “adopted son” of the new host country. In order to successfully enact the role of fieldwork, both to themselves and to their supporters, field workers must be “indigenized” as described in the previous chapter, accomplished through “heart language” proficiency. The host language is not just the mother tongue/heart language of individuals, necessary for an authentic interpersonal friendship, but also seen as the mother tongue of a country, the “genius of a people” in Condillac’s wording (Aarsleff 1982), the path to understanding the soul of a whole language-culture-nation complex. There is thus a “authenticity and moral significance” at stake in heart language proficiency.

4.4 LOVE THE WORLD AND THE ASSEMBLAGE OF MISSIONARY LANGUAGE LEARNING

As it is embedded within the larger assemblage of evangelicalism, Love the World’s institutional attitudes and policies towards language did not develop in a vacuum.
In meeting some of the individuals responsible for shaping language and language acquisition policy within the organization, I was able to trace back to other nodes in a larger assemblage of sites where ideologies about language learning for field work are forged and disseminated. Through several different pathways the model of learnerhood espoused by Love the World, and many other organizations, can be traced back to the Toronto Institute of Linguistics.

4.4.1 Toronto Institute of Linguistics (TIL)

The Toronto Institute of Linguistics has its origins as the Canadian School of Missions, which became a major missionary training center in the 1920’s and 1930’s (Burnett 2011). In 1947, the Toronto Institute of Linguistics was founded to support field workers learning languages, and also help them do linguistic fieldwork in their host countries. In the late 1960’s this had become a major program training around 100 students per year. In the early 1970’s its goals were to become “a centre for understanding world mission, for teaching missiology and to help end ethnocentric pride and narcissism, racial bigotry and mono-cultural blindness”. Steve Sweatman, the director of MTI, claimed in an interview that “the institute was known to be much better than any linguistics program in the US”. Five students of the Institute in the early 1970’s all went on to become major players in shaping evangelical attitudes towards second language acquisition, developing four separate but related language learning pedagogies emerging from these five actors. All are primarily sociocultural, focusing on acquisition through field-based, authentic interaction. Dwight Gradin, one of those five participants, communicated to me that the group was interested in methods being developed by the US Army and rooted in Skinnerian behaviorist theory. Indeed, all four of the language
acquisition methods, Don Larson’s Barefoot Method, the Brewsters’ LAMP method, Gradin’s PILAT method and less so Greg Thomson’s Growing Participator Approach, show some hallmarks of drill and repetition that were being used in audiolingual methods of language acquisition commonly used by the armed forces during that period.

Tom and his wife Betty Sue Brewster, who currently teaches Intercultural Studies at the prestigious Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, developed a method called LAMP (Language Acquisition Made Practical) which is still widely used today. I have encountered many proponents of LAMP in my personal travels around the world, and it is still being taught as the favored method of language acquisition at least at one Christian university in South Carolina. Many of my own participants mention previous exposure to LAMP as crucial in shaping their learnerhood, and have tried to employ LAMP as part of their language learning strategy. David, a Love the World field worker in Germany notes that “all the people who are unaccented, fluent, and who nationals are impressed by, used the LAMP method”. The person responsible for language learning at the Eastern European regional office noticed that almost all expats are using the LAMP method, and Amelia serving in Hungary noted to me that her friends used LAMP to learn Hungarian. Several readings on the theoretical and theological foundations of LAMP are even used in the StepOut orientation program and was the core of the StepOut language acquisition module before adopting the GPA as a preferred paradigm.

The LAMP method involves coming up with a phrase, getting it translated into the host language, memorizing that phrase, and going out into the community along a “language route”, trying out that phrase with at least twenty members of the host community. It is in many ways an audio-lingual drill, situated within a sociocultural
framework. This method is almost exclusively used by missions and development workers. Some of my participants felt its repetitive nature to be extremely tedious. Tara in Hungary said “there was this really famous book they told us to use, a book about how to learn languages. LAMP! Okay, I do not do that”. Erica in Slovenia described it as “straight wandering around the town trying to find people”. Jacob in Slovakia followed the LAMP method’s directions exactly and found it to be incredibly useful in building friendships with local shopkeepers, but not very useful to his language acquisition.

Some of these concerns about LAMP are shared by Dwight Gradin, the director of Mission Training International, and as a Toronto Institute of Linguistics participant, is well acquainted with the LAMP method. He feels that the scope of LAMP is too narrow, that there are vast areas of linguistic knowledge that LAMP is not very efficient at delivering, and that there remains a place for a language school in a learners toolbox of acquisition strategies. Even in situations where it makes the most sense to try LAMP, in areas with no language schools and no tradition of literacy, LAMP assumes a certain social model. According to Gradin, the method has limited effectiveness in cultures with a cold climate, and cultures where people are not gregarious, and have limited tolerance for gregarious encounters with strangers. Both of these limitations could be said to apply to Eastern Europe. Gradin has also observed that LAMP frustrates non-aggressive learners, and learners who are not good at induction-abstracting conscious metalinguistic patterns from the data being memorized.

4.4.2 Mission Training International (MTI)

Dwight and Barbara Gradin had worked in Vietnam as SIL-trained Bible translators until the Vietnam War cut their work short. Attending TIL, the Gradins along
with their classmates developed a desire to training field workers in field-based language acquisition methods. Gradin had to learn and describe the Jeh language of Vietnam using only sociocultural, learner-driven methodologies, as it was an unwritten language. They joined a pre-existing Missionary Furlough Center with the goal of preparing cross-cultural field workers for the realities of language acquisition, and also the emotional difficulties of serving as cross-cultural missionaries, and in 1975 launched their first pre-field language acquisition training program called PILAT (Program in Language Acquisition Techniques). MTI is influential, with over 300 hundred missions and development organizations outsourcing their pre-field language acquisition and cross-cultural training to MTI. In this role, MTI has a unique pulse on larger trends within the assemblage of missions and development agencies, as its leaders are in frequent contact with leaders from a wide range of organizations.

I participated in a PILAT training program for two weeks in the summer of 2011, positioned as a student interested in language acquisition techniques among Christian field workers. PILAT is a learner-driven acquisition method, with learners “discovering” aspects of the host language from an expert host language native speaker, through a series of careful designed communicative activities. These activities produce a data set which is used for audiolingual-style drilling, designed to automatize recall. The program is sociocultural in outlook however, with an early emphasis on object-mediation, and movement through other-mediation to self-mediation as prescribed by sociocultural approaches to SLA (Lantolf & Thorne 2007). It also focuses on “ways of speaking” rather than codified languages. While the method was originally designed for use with
unwritten languages spoken by non-literate peoples, it has been adapted for learning writing as well.

In general the program was enthusiastically embraced by the participants in PILAT as motivating and effective. However, in continuing correspondence with program respondents, I found that very few have used the method, and most have only a vague conception of how it worked after a year. They have tended to resort to language schools, tutors using Krashen-esque communicative approaches, supplemented with CALL materials, rather than finding a language helper and carrying out PILAT. PILAT is very easy to learn and implement however, and as I have shown the materials to various field-based language learners they were able to easily and quickly discern the implicit model and put it into use right away. This is a key difference from the Growing Participator Approach, which is both espoused and resisted by individuals in administrative positions within Love the World.

4.4.3 International Congress on Language Learning

Besides running the PILAT program, MTI organizes the International Congress on Language Learning every three years, as a site where language learning policy makers, language coaches, experienced and novice language learners, language school operators, meet together with academics in the field of SLA (albeit mainly from Christian colleges and universities) to share best practices. I participated in the ICLL conference in 2010, both presenting preliminary findings from my first field research trip, and gathering recordings and taking notes on the various approaches to second language learning being discussed, and to see what models of learnerhood emerged. Overall, there were strong biases against “linguistics”, with “linguistics” and “pragmatic language acquisition”
being opposed. In fact academicians, proponents of instruction which appeal to metalinguistic knowledge were positioned in one plenary as being the “dark side of moon” in an extended metaphorical sequence. It appears that when speakers were referring to linguistics, they had in mind the kind of grammatical descriptions done by the field linguists of SIL. Apparently, these grammar descriptions must have had some influence on how languages were conceived of and on how languages were learned, as they were held up as a model of ineffective learning. Several speakers conflated this conception of “linguistics” and “academic learning” into a pedagogy based around explicit grammar instruction and contrastive analysis (raising learners’ awareness of structural differences between the L1 and L2). If such methods had indeed been common in the language learning centers of the missionary assemblage, it is perhaps little surprise that a method based on very different assumptions should be held up as the model.

Greg Thomson, one of the TIL participants, attends each ICLL, and his method was a topic of many different presentations. There were testimonials from language school directors about the benefits of switching to the GPA, and much interest in the method emerged in informal conversations and seminars. I was not very well-educated on the method at the time, knowing of it only what I had gleaned attending StepOut, and talking with learners who had been using GPA-derived methodologies in fieldwork I carried out in the summer of 2010. The assumptions and practices of the GPA will be covered at length in Chapter 5, but I will mention here that the GPA is becoming a dominant paradigm in many language schools beyond those in the missionary-development worker assemblage. One language school director in Jordan has communicated with me in exasperation that almost all of the students in his Arabic school
desire a switch over to the GPA, even though the director has made his methodological and theoretical reservations clear. Academic language centers within the assemblage of missionary language learning, centers such as Biola University in Los Angeles and Wheaton College in Chicago, both of which offer graduate degrees in SLA seem broadly sympathetic to the sociocultural orientation of the GPA, but more reluctant to espouse the particular method.

Greg Thomson runs two-week trainings in the GPA several times a year, in various locations around the world, and the method is complex enough that a two-week training seems needed to grasp all that is involved. One participant in the ICLL conferences, who also attended a two-week GPA training, is also one of the people most directly involved with language acquisition ideologies in Love the World. For this study I will refer to her as Mary. Figure 4.3 then shows how Love the World is connected, largely through Mary, to the nodes in the transnational assemblage of missionary language learning which I have described above.

![Diagram](image-url)

**Figure 4.3: Nodes and flows in the assemblage of missionary language learning**

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4.5 **Love the World and its Model of Second Language Acquisition**

Although Mary has taken it upon herself to advocate for and support language acquisition within Love the World, it is not her official title. In fact there is no position that oversees language acquisition policies and planning within the organization. The gaps are filled through the efforts of individuals whose primary appointment is in other roles. Of the people who have a say in language acquisition policy, Mary is the only one who has formal training in second language acquisition, and this was something she acquired later in her career in order to better advocate for and support the needs of language learners. She herself attended bilingual education in her schooling, was an exchange student overseas in high school, and served as an International Staff in Latin America where she used the Brewsters' LAMP method to learn the language. Her personal experience as a successful learner led to her being given responsibility for improving language learning training. In response to this responsibility, she received a MA in Teaching Teachers of ESL, has taken a course in language assessment, and has taken the formal GPA training run by Greg Thomson. She is very well connected in the assemblage diagrammed in Figure 4.3, and has been in charge of language acquisition training, and of setting up language coaches within the organization for around fifteen years.

While Mary is positioned by many of my participants as “the language person” in the organization, the powers to make policy changes are distributed among several different actors, who are housed in different departments of Love the World. This, coupled with the fact that while decisions about theology, human resources and strategy are made at the global level, decisions about matters such as language learning are seen
as local problems, and are devolved to the regions, who then often devolve decision making further to the national offices. These factors make it hard to generalize, or state what “the real” language acquisition policy of Love the World is. The best I can do is present a picture based on personal observations, incidental conversations, and documents obtained from the organization. Because of my data sources, my characterizations of language learning policies are probably skewed through a European lens. Different regions, such as those in Africa or South Asia, with who I have had no contact, may operate very differently. In this section I will describe the various points in a learner’s organizational trajectory where socialization into second language learnerhood is most likely to occur, and try to describe the kinds of socialization that happen at each point.

4.5.1 Language acquisition training before joining staff

By the time a person makes the commitment to join International Staff, he or she has usually been exposed to some kind of statements from Love the World staff about language acquisition. This would most commonly occur at the beginning of a spring or summer project, and again just before heading out on a Sprint, at what is known as the Sprint Brief. The language component of this Brief is extremely limited. The program is designed and run by a completely different arm of the organization than that which oversees the StepOut program for training International Staff. Several individuals in the field remarked that the organizers of this program had not necessarily lived overseas. Although they had completed a Sprint, they did not need to learn the language or acculturate long term (as dictated by the ideologies discussed in Section 4.3.3), a fact
which may have affected how the importance of language acquisition was presented to
the future Sprinters. I was unable to get permission to gather data at the Sprint Brief.

It is structured around four statements, “love the Lord, love the team, learn a
culture, and launch a movement” with language learning being a very small portion of the
“learn a culture” segment. The only explicit language acquisition teaching remembered
by the Sprinters I interviewed, was a brief and only partly understood explanation of the
“iceberg principle” of the GPA, which I will explain in more detail in Chapter 5. This
principle was summarized by one Sprinter as “You might be able to say and speak a little
but there’s so much underneath that you do not think you’re learning”. In fact two
Sprinters said that no one they knew (of the Sprinters in their sites and other sites) looked
at the training manual given to them at the briefing because there was “so much stuff in
it”, and themselves used it as kindling to start a fire. While this is certainly an extreme
case, most of the Sprinters I spoke with did not consult this manual regularly, and relied
more on their local team’s expectations than on their prefield training when deciding how
to use their time at their field sites.

In some countries the Sprinters learn more about language learning during their
first week in the field. The site where Sprinters hear most about language learning is in
Italy, where language learning was definitely stressed more in their country briefing than
in the Sprint Brief according to those I interviewed. What they recalled from the Brief
was that 1) language learning is stressful, 2) they should spend two hours a week on
language learning and count it as if it were “ministry time” and 3) you can use gestures
and other techniques to make up for holes in linguistic knowledge. Although this was the
most intense example of language learning in Sprint training I encountered, it wasn’t
systematic language acquisition training. Rather it used anecdotal stories to motivate learners and to prepare them for frustration. In some individual cities, there can be more intense language learning. Two Sprinters, Pete and Tom, who both achieved far greater than average proficiency, discuss the situation in a different city in their same country.

P: The team in [city name] does SO MUCH stuff. They had language school and had 100 verbs to memorize every week and a quiz every Friday.
T: That’s so dumb.
P: It may help some people, but it discouraged most of them. There was one guy, Jonathan, who learned [the language] by reading the Bible, and he had an iPod App.
T: That’s sort of lame
P: A lot of my motivation came from him. You CAN become fluent in just a few months. I do not know if I can, but someone can
T: Well I did not do that this summer {yet he did become fluent}
P: Jonathan and Tom are language beasts- it’s motivating to me.
T: I’m good at it. So I do not really care about it- I do not care about the things I’m good at. Jonathan cares more.
P: I wouldn’t be able to lead so much if I was in [city name], cause I’d have been so weighted down with language.
(Pete and Tom, Italy, field interview 2012)

Pete downplays his own language aptitude, positioning Tom and Jonathan rather as language beasts. Although unaware of sociocultural methods, Pete is the ideal sociocultural learner, having achieved considerable proficiency from hanging out with Italians in a gelateria. Yet he does not see himself as “weighted down” with language learning, the way that learners in the other city are (including Jonathan) who used decidedly non-sociocultural methods such as verb lists, quizzes, Bible reading and iPod apps. Pete on his own intuited many principles from the GPA, yet feels insecure about his own Italian.
Overall, Sprinters arrive on site with only very vague mentions of language learning, and often are unable to even greet or thank in their host language. In some sites, such as Ljubljana, they were actively discouraged from the learning language, and the fact that “you did not need to learn the language” was held out as a recruiting tool. The organization does not deal with language acquisition at Sprint Brief (perhaps because some participants go to English-speaking countries), and devolves responsibility to the national level. National leaders tend to have little access to language acquisition training themselves, and pass on to new Sprinters whatever anecdotal experience has been collected at each field site. I will discuss in greater detail the language learning practices of Sprinters in Section 8.3.

4.5.2 Language acquisition training at StepOut

StepOut is a six-week residential orientation program which is usually completed while candidates for International Staff are still in their support raising stage, and before they get sent to their field sites. Seven of my participants attended StepOut after having already served for a year in their host sites; their attendance at the orientation was delayed by factors such as childbirth or marriage. The ideal is for the program to be completed in July, and then for staff to arrive at their host sites for the first time in time for the academic season in the fall. The material from StepOut would be relatively fresh upon arrival, with only a couple months intervening. This ideal is not met for several reasons, and the timing of StepOut limits the effectiveness of it as a key site for socialization into language acquisition, a point I discuss in greater detail in Section 8.5.

According to Mary, the purpose of StepOut language program is to equip participants to better learn the host language, avoiding two extreme positions which have
been attested among similar organizations and among certain staff within the organization.

there’s been kind of two extremes in the organization
and I think it’s probably common with other organizations too
but the one extreme of you know you cannot be involved on campus until you’ve
got this level of language
and passed such and such a test
certain countries do have that kind of policy
and then the other extreme which has kind of been a reaction to the first one
is just to get involved in ministry right away
and take time to learn the language
maybe in the summer for an intensive two-month class
or kind of when you can
as you go
and I disagree with both of them
(Mary, interview, StepOut 2010)

Not only Mary, but also the leaders of MTI characterize these two positions, language
before ministry, or ministry before language, as common in the missions/development
world, and against which an informed and effective language learning policy should be
devised. The first is that people spend a great deal of time in an intense or immersive
language learning environment before being released to work on the “projects” or
“ministry” which constitute the primary goal of being sent to the host country.

Based on two informal interviews with former Mormons, this is how the Mormon
missionaries, widely praised for their language proficiency among my participants,
operate, attending a two-three month immersive program with a high bar for exit
proficiency before being allowed to formally begin their “mission”. The other extreme is
for “ministry” to begin right away, and for language to be fit in whenever convenient.
Mary’s overarching goal, in line with all the descendants of the Toronto Institute of
Linguistics, has been to seek out ways that language learning and “ministry” can be
mutually reinforcing. Sociocultural approaches, such as the GPA are attractive precisely
because of their promises to facilitate language learning while engaging in “deep life sharing” (Thomson 2007). Mary has sought to promote the GPA during the StepOut training as a way to bypass this language learning-ministry binary. Yet her ability to implement this vision is limited by the size, and the decentralized structure of the organization.

I also do not have a whole lot of power or authority so I do not make the calls on any of these things and actually have no say
I have a say in a little bit on what the StepOut get and what the pre-field training looks like
I do not have a say in how long that is how many days of classes I get to teach and what goes on before or after
(Mary, interview, StepOut 2010)

In an earlier incarnation of the pre-field training, beginning in 1997, there were eleven weeks of training instead of six. In this previous incarnation, according to Mary:

we did a whole week of language learning and we would go to Mexico and do it there in Spanish and use LAMP and mostly to expose people to a non-classroom kind of method and I had used that when we went to Uruguay when I learned Spanish and it just worked well and it has its faults but I was kind of a strong believer in that
(Mary, interview, StepOut 2010)

This was training in the LAMP method, one of the methods which emerged from the Toronto Institute of Linguistics, described in Section 4.4.1. LAMP is designed for true beginners in a language, and as more and more of the new International Staff had done a Sprint before, and thus were not true beginners, the effectiveness of this training was lessened, “gradually more and more they had some level of language and starting LAMP
at a later level was difficult for them”. According to Mary, the requirements of approaching 30 or 40 strangers in an hour also made it hard for Westerners to apply this technique, perhaps because of cultural beliefs about not interrupting strangers. When Mary was made aware of the Growing Participator Approach, through her contacts at the ICLL conference, she began to advocate for the adoption of this approach, as it promised to, like LAMP, resolve the tension between language learning and ministry and use field-based methods. The difference was that it appeared to be more structured and tiered for non-beginners. She explained this transition overtly to the StepOut participants in the following extract, positioning the GPA as cutting-edge (line 5), reflecting the latest developments in SLA (lines 8, 11), flexible to accommodate individual learners as their choices (lines 20-23), and widely-used (lines 28-29).

1. about six years ago we
2. the cross-cultural training that you’re getting here
3. switched from using the LAMP method to using the ‘Growing Participator Approach.’
4. both are
5. at the time that they were made were based on kind of cutting-edge research
6. what we knew about how people learned language.
7. however, LAMP was written back in 1975
8. and so we’ve learned some things since then
9. that have kind of made some of the principles and ideas of LAMP maybe
10. well
11. some of them maybe are not as much how we figured out how people best learn
12. It does not mean LAMP does not work
13. I still tell people if you’re willing to use it
14. and want to I’ll help you do that and we can do that.
15. but we also felt like we needed to switch to something different
16. because we were starting to get a lot more Sprinters
17. people who were coming in not at a beginner level
18. more at an intermediate level
19. some at an advanced level
20. and the Growing Participator Approach gives people the opportunity
21. to kind of step in at different levels
22. and use ideas from it to take it
23. to glean ideas
24. and take them with them where they’re going
25. to whatever level
26. whatever language they’re going to be at.
27. it also very much ties the culture and the language together
28. and I think the Growing Participator Approach is
29. it’s being used widely by missions groups and missionaries around the world
30. so you may run into other people using it if you decide to use it.
31. There’s no pressure that you have to use it.
(Mary, lecture, StepOut 2010)

She encountered resistance within the organization to implementing the GPA, resistance which I also documented in interviews with national and regional leaders, and which causes her to hedge the method’s adoption in line 31. The resistance is both at the national and organizational levels, which I describe in Chapter 7.

Notably, the length of the StepOut program was shrunk from eleven to six weeks as well. If new International Staff followed the ideal trajectory, they would have some cross-cultural training before doing a summer project. More would come from both the formal Sprint Brief as well as the on-the-field experience that comes with being a Sprinter. The organization decided that since training in cross-cultural communication, support raising, interpersonal dynamics, and personal health was being covered at these points in the trajectory, there was less need for pre-field training before joining International Staff. While training in these other areas has effectively been spread out across an institutional stream of development, training in language acquisition has decreased dramatically in the new stream-of-development model. Language acquisition training is limited to a few remarks at summer project orientation, less than half an hour of the Sprint Brief (according to Sprinters I interviewed), and now only four half-day
instructional times at the StepOut in 2011. This amounts to about nine actual hours of content related to language acquisition training. This is far less than the PILAT program, or the official GPA training seminars run by Greg Thomson, which both involve about sixty hours of language acquisition training over two weeks.

Overall, language acquisition training is notably underrepresented in the pre-field training for International Staff compared to financial, theological and interpersonal training. Changes to the orientation process have squeezed most of the burden for language acquisition training to several half-day sessions within the six week StepOut program. Even at the StepOut program, there is not any one person responsible for language acquisition training, and the competing experiences and opinions of the different responsible actors make it difficult to implement a concise and streamlined training. Since some of the new International Staff serve in English-speaking environments, such as Australia, there is not even a universal need to train participants in language acquisition, another constraint to the expansion of language acquisition training.

4.5.3 Language acquisition policies based on documents

There is no organization-wide document which is definitive for language acquisition policy. However, information was gathered, by Mary and myself, from the national directors of various countries on their own language learning policies. The national offices which provided information have their policies and assessments presented in the following chart, with some countries of sensitive operation anonymized.
TABLE 4.1: Language policies of representative countries within Love the World

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Language requirements for International Staff</th>
<th>Assessment standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Country W</td>
<td>“We expect husbands/singles to get through 3 levels of language study in the first 12 months, wives/moms to get through 2 levels”</td>
<td>“Everyone will be involved in Language study until they can lead a small group in a local language”. Level assessments by native speakers in local language school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Croatia</td>
<td>2 years; first year is 30+ hours per week in language learning; 2nd year 50% language and 50% ministry</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Y</td>
<td>Sprinters &amp; International Staff 12-20 hrs. Can do class or private tutor. International Staff minimum of 3 yrs study.</td>
<td>“Goal is proficiency”. Advancing to next level in state-sponsored language courses.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>Five days a week on language. First two years are for language.</td>
<td>Must pass level three of state Italian proficiency exam</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>France</td>
<td>Minimum of nine months, full-time language learning</td>
<td>“We do not take a test at the end, but you have to be able to function in staff meetings in French, have to be able to stand in front of a group of French people and express yourself reasonably well, and be able to talk in informal settings and dialogue on most subjects at a reasonable level. French staff make a quick, informal evaluation”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Country Z</td>
<td>30 hours a week of language for first 2 years, 15 hours a week for moms</td>
<td>Level tests in GPA-based curriculum available to learners. Requires trained native speaker to evaluate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Venezuela</td>
<td>“No formal language policy”</td>
<td>“Goal is to carry on a conversation”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>at least 30 hours per week for the first year</td>
<td>A newly arriving IR/ICS will have as his/her goal to become “functionally fluent” within 2 years of arrival in country. For the sake of objective evaluation, this is measured by the passing of the Level One Exam for Russian Fluency given in universities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden</td>
<td>First two years are for language, supposed to spend at least 20 hours a week on language.</td>
<td>Passing levels at state-sponsored language courses.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Although not all countries are presented here, these responses typify the wide range of policies at the country level. In the absence of direction from the organization, and in light of the reluctance of even regional offices to set language policies, nations are left to come up with language learning policies that are often ill-defined, especially as regards assessment. In some cases, such as Sweden or Country Y, the organization basically outsources language acquisition to institutional language courses, relying on them for instruction and assessment. This counteracts the move in the missions-language-acquisition assemblage away from academic and classroom learning towards one-on-one, field based methods, a move which Mary would like to see Love the World follow.

4.5.4 Language learning as a function of hours

In almost every country, language acquisition is quantified as a function of time. In the ways that policies are officially stated, and the ways that individual staff talk about language acquisition, it is perceived as “only a matter of time” before an individual learns a language. This was most clearly articulated in an interview with an International Staff who pioneered work in the Czech Republic, and now is in a key leadership position at the regional office in Budapest. He went through the StepOut training when it was eleven weeks long and focused on the LAMP method. He said that the one thing which stood out to him from that training, 22 years earlier, was a comment by one of the then area directors, who was positioned as an expert on language learning.

[He] said, there is a certain amount of hours written in the sky for how much each person has to put into language learning, it is different for every person. The sooner you can knock those hours off the sooner you’ll be done because you have to spend those hours learning it. (Former International Staff in Czech Rep, field interview 2012)

This view of language learning as just a “matter of time”, with “putting in hours” being the goal, is the predominant metaphor within second language learnerhood at every level
of the organization. “Hours” thinking is manifested not only in policy documents, but also in references to “putting in language hours” and “doing their years of language learning” in all forms of organizational discourse, formal and informal. This focus on time as the fundamental unit of language acquisition is found within the GPA itself, which proscribes a set amount of hours that a learner spends before moving onto the next stage. Amelia for example, when looking over the GPA materials, said “you know I even looked at, if I did six hours a week in these 22 weeks, how many hours can I get into a year typically?”.

4.5.5 Language learning as a function of years

Amelia wanted to calculate how many stages of the GPA she could cover during her “two years of language”, the most frequent amount of time given to International Staff by their country leaders to focus on language. It is expected in country policies that International Staff will be “conversational” or “proficient” in the language, as measured by the ability to “accomplish” certain tasks such as “attending staff meetings in the host language” or “able to have a spiritual conversation”. For the most part, terms like “conversational” or “proficient” remain subjective and undefined. “Fluency” as a construct is not held out in national policies as a goal for these two years of language learning. “Fluency” is however frequently held out by participants as a goal.

[The GPA method] fits my overall goals of being fluent which is our primary goal in the language” (Amelia, Hungary, StepOut 2011)

And so it’s hard for me to say where I would like to be [after one year]. I’d like to be fluent. (Jacob, Slovakia, StepOut 2010)

We have to become fluent in the language (Michael, Italy, StepOut 2011)

E: You know I would love to commit to five years almost it will take three to really get to the point where I am fluent and really functional there so it would be a shame to leave
The two years of language seems to originate in the discourses of MTI, which sponsors the ICLL conference, and is the major player in the formation of language acquisition policies. In the twentieth century, it was more typical for missionaries to make lifelong commitments to one field site. According to Steve Sweatman, the director of MTI, five years is the most common time commitment now, as Erica states in the above transcript, a fact which makes it harder to convince missions and development agencies to let their staff devote time to language learning. The pressure is intense for missions agencies to give two years for language learning on paper, but to quickly push learners into other tasks and duties.

S: one of [our policy objectives for missions agencies] is to give their people two years of language full-time as their primary task
I: two years?
S: two years as a minimum. Not as a maximum. But with that being primary. Because what’s going on- the agencies will say that “we want long-term” and “we want them fluent” and three months later [the field workers] are on to these tasks, this accomplishment, and the programmatic wheel, and that’s sucking 30 to 40 hours a week. And there’s literally no time left over, so they’re plateauing at early levels of fluency levels or at a lack of fluency levels.
(Steve Sweatman, interview, ICLL conference 2010)

Miriam Jerome, a professional counselor to returning missions and development workers with decades of experience, also acknowledges the same pattern: “One of the things that is difficult- you say you have to do two years of language learning, but missionaries take on other projects, other priorities” (personal communication).
4.6 MY POSITIONING WITHIN THE ASSEMBLAGE

So far in this chapter I have introduced the organization Love the World and shown its constituency and how it is connected to MTI, the ICLL conference, the descendants of the Toronto Institute of Linguistics, all nodes within an assemblage of missionary language acquisition training. Each of these nodes has influence on the learnerhood of my participants, through such agents as the StepOut pre-field training, local language schools for field workers and development workers, and conversations with other expats serving with different organizations. In carrying out this study however, in many ways I as a researcher became the most relevant site of socialization into learnerhood. As someone interviewing them about and observing their language learning, a kind of participant-observer (Modan 2007), my interactions could not help but make my participants focus more on their identities as language learners than they otherwise would have. For example, Michael, who I observed in Italy, commented that he thought my being there had improved his language learning, because he’d been trying to show off for me, increase his pace, and pay more attention. A Sprinter in Sweden told me “you being here has made me want to try harder with language”. In the interest of transparency, I will discuss in this section how I positioned myself vis-à-vis my participants, how they positioned me as someone interested in language acquisition, and how my presence may have affected their learnerhood.

4.6.1 How I was introduced to participants

Participants became familiar with me when I was introduced to them by Mary, at the StepOut training, at the beginning of the portion on Language Acquisition. The following excerpt is how Mary introduced me at StepOut 2011.
And I wanted to just introduce you to one person who’s here – Thor – I do not even know where you are. There you are. Some of you may have met him already, but Thor is a graduate student here who studies at USC, the University of Southern Carolina? South Carolina.

And he came last year to StepOut and interviewed some people and he’s doing his PhD on our language learning and I’m excited about that. So if he asks you for an interview, please oblige and work with him. He’s also going to be doing a little bit of teaching up front here in the next few days – tomorrow – so you’ll get to hear from him and learn a little bit more about him too.

(Mary, presentation, StepOut 2011)

To assist Mary, in appreciation for the privilege of observing StepOut 2011, I did a 45 minute teaching on phonetics and learning pronunciation in the host language, including a brief introduction to the concepts of phonemic transfer and allophonic rules, and the sociolinguistic meanings of having an accent. This presentation further positioned me as a language expert. I spoke only on that specific topic, and not about broader approaches to language learning. I also participated in a four person panel where I was interviewed about how to make use of language classrooms as part of learning. I spoke briefly on attention in language classes, and the role of interaction in classroom activities in assisting learning. In StepOut 2010, I was not asked to contribute in any public way to the language acquisition training. I was positioned in introductions as someone who had participated in the organization’s undergraduate activities, but it was noted that I was not a field worker. This made me an anomaly, as every other participant at StepOut was a field worker of Love the World. My role as a graduate student was also anomalous at the ICLL conference, where all other participants were on staff with missions or development organizations, or professors at evangelical universities such as Biola or Wheaton.
4.6.2 Positioning myself vis-à-vis my participants

In initially establishing a relationship with my participants, they were most curious to know what my dissertation was about, and what my past involvement with Love the World had been. My standard answer was that my dissertation was on how field workers and development workers learn foreign languages overseas, what works for them and what does not work for them. My participants had all finished large state universities, and so were familiar as well with graduate students and the dissertation writing process. Many commented about friends they had who were also writing dissertations or gathering data, and some confessed that they had hoped to get a PhD. This provided a framework as well for my reasons in interviewing them and being interested in their language acquisition.

When asked, I explained that I wanted to do this project so that I could help agencies, especially Love the World who had generously given me access to its learners, do a better job preparing and supporting their staff for language learning. They often asked if Love the World had commissioned this study, and I would reply that although they hadn’t commissioned it, I was hoping to provide the organization with my findings. I imagine that this made them more willing to share their experiences with me, knowing it would help the organization in the future. When asked about my personal involvement with Love the World, I said that I had not been very involved in the organization, even as an undergraduate, that I had friends who were on staff. Many of them know my personal friends who suggested to me in the first place that Love the World might be an interesting organization to study. This provided an instant connection, positioning me as a “legitimate peripheral participant” (Lave & Wenger 1991). I had also been invited by
those same friends to participate in a large conference of Love the World personnel from over 100 countries, which took place in Korea. It was at that conference that the idea for this research project was first conceived by me. Many of my participants had also participated in that same conference, and when that connection was discovered, participants felt more comfortable about my motives and involvement with Love the World.

My positioning as a researcher was especially measurable in the narratives through the use of deictic forms, such as pronouns. In the rest of the section, I show how pronouns positioned me with or against my informants, either sharing the identity of cross-cultural learning, or being an outsider to the field site and their specific experiences. Pronouns map social relationships onto spatial systems of alignment, demarcating narrative spaces of the speaker (1st person space), the audience (2nd person space), and others (3rd person space), and to indicate who is standing with who in each of those spaces. Pronoun usage then reveals when I as the interviewer am the direct audience or a potential member of a potential audience (such as people interested in learning in Serbo-Croatian). Analyzing the discourse antecedent for “we” also reveals whether I am included with the interviewee in a community of people interested in language learning, or excluded from a “we” which refers just to cross-cultural field workers. In the following extract, Mark extends the actions of “we” (Jack+ other missionaries) to “you” (a generalized language learner).

1 you can get by on English
2 like we did
3 when you’re 23
4 you can’t get by
5 the same way when you’re 30
6 when you’re married
In this episode, Jack positions himself as a member of the “we” of missionaries (line 2), a group whose actions should or should not be emulated by other learners. In line 7, the referent of “you” switches from the generalized language learner to me, the researcher, returning consciously to the storytelling event, with the narrative gaze on me. Shifts in the deictic values of the pronouns can be useful for marking shifts between the worlds being narrated. The stretch of text immediately following demonstrates such a shift.

In this passage, “we” shifts, most clearly in lines 16 and 23, to mean “Jack + Bosnian students”. Mark is showing the ideal solidarity with Bosnians and inclusion in an in-group that had more in common than differences. Then Mark returns his narrative gaze to me, and the Bosnians move back to 3rd person space.

Pronouns then are a tool used to demarcate the boundaries between the narrated and storytelling words (Wortham 2001), and to indicate whether my participants see me as a member of a shared community or as an outsider to a community of missionaries, and
also whether they position me as a researcher or even themselves as a field worker as outsiders to the imagined national community (Anderson 1991) of host country residents.

4.6.3 Positioning as a language expert

A striking feature of transcribed interviews was the frequent use of “you know” as a discourse marker. The quote from Amelia which opened the dissertation is presented here in a line-by-line format, revealing the discourse salience of this feature.

1 I was like “listen to this!”
2 like “look this up!”
3 you know
4 but like even before I read that
5 I was just thinking
6 “oh wow”
7 it really is a unique
8 umm
9 you know
10 there are people that learn languages
11 but even like
12 you know
13 businessmen and they have
14 you know
15 interpreters and translators
16 like missionaries are really the people that go
17 and a part of their life is
18 you know
19 really stepping in to learn the language
20 you know
21 and I know there are other professions
22 but I I really feel like it’s
23 such a part of our calling
24 and so in that sense I
25 just this is a unique privilege
26 this is not something that many people
27 you know
28 really get to do
29 and what it reflects about
30 you know
31 incarnational mission
   (Amelia, Hungary, StepOut 2011)
In this extract, I asked what is at stake for Amelia, as a Christian, in learning or not learning the local language well. The frequent use of “you know” in pauses does serve as thought filler and a marker of informality. Yet "you know" shows that Amelia expects me to relate to what she is saying, and positions me, the interviewer, as knowledgeable, both in the areas of language expertise (as revealed in Amelia’s questions presented later in this section) and in cross-cultural learning. Interestingly however the pronoun “our” (line 23) is, and in the continuing discourse has the antecedent of “missionaries” (line 16), a group which I am excluded from by Amelia in her pronoun choice. My role as a language learner with overseas residential experience is indexed with “you know”, but even though I am ostensibly a member of the group “Christian”, her use of “we” and “our” in the larger extract excludes me from the group of missionaries, which is unique (line 7) in her mind, and contrasted with “other professions” (line 21).

At many points in both formal interviews and spontaneous conversations, participants also positioned me as knowledgeable, and addressed questions to me about the nature of language and language acquisition. I tried as hard as I could to respect their question, but not provide too specific of an answer, one that would betray my exact philosophy of language learning, and therefore unduly bias these learners’ sense of learnerhood. And yet my informants were very aware of my identity as a "PhD student" and "language expert"; certain aspects of learnerhood were probably highlighted for me that would have been downplayed for others. In a conversation in a car, where Jack was describing the language policies of other organizations’ workers in his city, Jack asked my thoughts on those policies.

1 but then it's such a we’re so individual
2 Thor
that's something else like
you probably talked about this already so
I mean you’re the PhD student
(Jack, Bosnia, field observation 2012)

In this case, Jack kept talking and I wasn’t made to comment on that organization’s policies. Later, he asked a more abstract question about language acquisition.

Thor you tell me...
when you learn a language
does like what
what is it like when you’ve built a house like
and then
it's a lot of like
after you’ve put up the main structure
it’s smaller more detailed work
and then it’s a lot of almost like decorating
or is it always like
(Jack, Bosnia, field observation 2012)

I did comment on Jack’s proposed metaphor, offering a different metaphor. Since I was a "language expert" this metaphor had authority for prescribing learnerhood. Despite trying to remain vague about how my metaphor might be exactly translated into language learning activity, this moment was part of Jack's socialization into learnerhood, and these sorts of interactions must play a role in shaping their concept of language learning.

I would say it’s a lot more like
a tree?
growing out of the ground?
it’s not like you’re framing a house first and filling it in
like a language
like the way its stored in your head is
sort of like a branching network
(me, Bosnia, field observation 2012)

As I conducted my field research, I had tried to learn enough of each of the languages of the various field sites to communicate in a basic level. This was made easier
by the fact that many of the languages were Slavic, and bore a resemblance to Russian, which I already spoke well. My efforts to use the host languages around my participants, especially when interacting with host nationals in such simple situations as ordering food or buying tickets, frequently impressed my participants. These attempts of a true beginner to try to use Bosnian when English would have sufficed would have been noticed by informants and become part of their beliefs of when to try using the host language. For example, Theresa described how she had written an essay in Serbo-Croatian about how very tired she was. I spontaneously attempted to try saying that sentence in Serbo-Croatian.

I: *ja puna umorna sam?* (‘I am very tired(FEM)’)
T: yeah exactly! Look at you! Very good!
(Theresa and I, Bosnia, field interview, 2012)

Theresa's choice of English to respond may have been due to her uncertainty about my language level, or the fact that we had been speaking in English. Nevertheless she was impressed by my choice to attempt to use my highly truncated repertoire in a situation where I could have used English, and as a truly temporary visitor had a good excuse for doing so. Such attempts may be seen as "what a language expert would do" or might be written off as not worth copying, since I was seen as a "language expert" and not a normal learner.

When my participants introduced me to their host national friends as a linguistics student, interested in language learning, on several occasions the host national assumed that I spoke their language fluently. I would then have to explain that I was studying language learners in many countries not just their country. Inevitably, I was asked to explain how many languages I spoke. This conversation, had in front of my participants, also positioned me as a language expert, and potentially made my opinions more
influential in their socialization into learnerhood. The following interactions with Tara
and Amelia, learners of Hungarian, show that they position me as a linguist and language
lover.

1 T: you see!! (that the language is so interesting)
2 you must be really like
3 “I love language!”
4 I did not really know how much I loved languages?
5 until I tried to learn Hungarian!
6 I: this is a fascinating language!
7 T: it’s - it’s amazing!!
8 J (her husband): it’s crazy
   (Tara, Jim and I, Hungary, field interview 2012)

1 A: I was like do we (English speakers) have [the <gy>/[ğ] sound in Hungarian]? 
2 I: sometimes you say a sound like it in like “what’s up witcha?”.
3 A: {cracking up}
4 I: “What’s wrong witcha?”
5 A: I love those!!
6 I: or like “wouldya”? “wouldya like to go outside?”.
7 E: Oh!!
8 I: because the ‘d’ is for the forward.
9 A: <cracking up> ok you’re gonna be our language coach from now on!
   (Amelia, Eric and I, Hungary, StepOut 2011)

So I was positioned to my participants as a legitimate peripheral participant in the Love
the World organization, connected primarily through shared personal connections. I was
positioned by them as a language expert, which seemed to include knowledge of
language learning practices, as well as knowledge of the specific languages they were
studying. As much as I was observing them, my participants were perhaps observing me,
my own language behavior as a beginning learner of the host languages, and my
responses, both verbal and non-verbal to their statements in interviews and spontaneous
interactions. As it is atypical in Love the World for someone to be so intentional about
observing and asking specifically about their language learning, these individuals may
have been more conscious about their identities as host language learners than International Staff who did not participate in this study.

4.7 SUMMARY

In summary, Love the World as an organization plays an intermediary role, connecting the individuals who it sends overseas to learn languages to the larger ideals of second language learnerhood that circulate within the evangelical community. Love the World’s staff encounter these ideals of learnerhood, not only through the StepOut training, but also through personal connections with individuals serving with other evangelical NGO’s at their same field sites. These workers with other organizations have been exposed to these ideologies of learnerhood directly through training programs such as PILAT, or indirectly, through their organizations’ policy makers’ connections to MTI and the ICLL conference. Within Love the World itself however, there is not a firm consensus or formal institutional position on second language acquisition. Those who are in power to make and enforce decisions have not been trained in, and may have little personal experience with, second language acquisition themselves. Decisions about enforcing second language acquisition policies seem to be passed on to ever more local levels of the organization, in the name of “flexibility”. Leaders at the national or field site level wear many different hats, often have less access to resources for supporting second language acquisition, and are left to their own devices in supporting the language acquisition of incoming staff.
5. SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY AND THE GROWING PARTICIPATOR APPROACH

5.1 SOCIOCULTURAL THEORY IN SLA

As described in Section 3.6.4, sociocultural theory is a theory of human behavior and cognition developed by the Soviet psychologist Lev Vygotsky in the 1930’s. Vygotsky (1978) was primarily concerned with how culturally organized artifacts mediate biologically endowed cognitive processes. James Wertsch (1985) coined the term “sociocultural”, a term which Vygotsky never used, to capture Vygotsky’s view of cognition as embedded in external cultural practices. Vygotsky saw learning as a process whereby individuals internalize processes that start out as observable external manipulation of tools, manipulation which novices learn in the context of apprenticeship to more experienced members of a community.

Over time, these external processes which involve manipulation of objects, become more and more internal, until the mediation is fully within the self. An important step in the transition from external manipulation of objects to internal manipulation of ideas is the move from talking with an “other” to using self-talk. Self-talk is a symbolic “I-me” conversation whereby the learner relies on internal language to accomplish a task. Eventually the task can be fully automatic as the cognition processes become “fossilized” (Vygotsky 1978:68), and the mediation of a conversation with an “other”, or with the self, are no longer needed. When applied to the realm of human language, sociocultural theory sees communicative competence in a language not as something which pre-exists or can be assumed, as in a Saussurean approach, but as something which is always
developmental, and informed by its contexts. Competence, including communicative competence, is never an attribute of an individual but an emergent phenomenon properly located in the collective cognition of a cultural moment, and in the dialogic interaction between persons (Bakhtin 1981, Kataoka et al 2013).

5.1.1 What is sociocultural theory in SLA

Sociocultural theory’s attempts to unify biological imperatives and cultural practices make language a natural field for its application. As Vygotsky’s project was to originally develop a theory of children’s play, his work privileged children’s language use, not adult second language learning. However, second language acquisitionists (Frawley & Lantolf 1985, Lantolf 1993, 2000, 2002, 2006, 2011, Lantolf & Thorne 1997, Thorne 2003) have sought to apply the theoretical framework of sociocultural theory to adult second language acquisition. This work does not explicitly support or refute generativists’ claim that there is a critical period for language acquisition (Johnson & Newport 1989, Birdsong 1999, DeKeyser 2000) related to the shutdown of a language acquisition device (Chomsky 1965, 1986). Because access to the language acquisition is not fully retained, adult language learning is claimed to be of a fundamentally different character than children’s language learning. Sociocultural theorists in SLA seek to test whether adults’ language learning behavior exhibits patterns of moving from external to internal mediation which would be consistent with Vygotsky’s theory. Within generative approaches to language acquisition, access to universal grammar and the language acquisition device is restricted in or closed to adult learners, and the variability which can be seen in adult learners’ proficiency is explained by the fact that adult learners are left to their own cognitive devices, devices which might include connectionist modeling (Bley-

Sociocultural theorists of SLA would minimally claim that adult language learning is both an individual cognitive and interactional cultural activity. Greg Thomson (2007) puts it thus: “language is not separate from the way of life (culture) that it supports, and that it depends on, nor is it separable from the concrete activities of the people, nor from their specific interpersonal relationships”. This approach critiques methodologies that see SLA as merely the provision of input which feeds an autonomous and individual mental grammar. Sociocultural theorists would also claim that adults, whether or not there is a language acquisition device, scaffold language learning through external and internal mediation, “apprenticed” to more experienced language learners. Sociocultural theory in SLA focuses on “if and how learners develop the ability to use the new language to mediate (i.e., regulate or control) their mental and communicative activity, not only in terms of target-like performance but also in terms of the quality and quantity of external mediation required” (Lantolf 2011:24). All human behavior is determined by its motive, goal, and the material circumstances in which it is enacted (Lantolf and Thorne 2006), so these factors will introduce a great deal of variability in ultimate attainment, and must be accounted for when modeling second language development. Contrary to theories which assume an autonomous and stably developing second language grammar, Coughlan & Duff (1994) showed that L2 performance “need not be consistent across tasks for single learners or across different learners for single tasks. They argued that performance depends greatly on the specific goals individuals have for speaking” (Lantolf 2011: 28). Since the sociocultural conditions of each linguistic task
are different, modeling second language development is difficult within sociocultural theory, and requires a longitudinal view, within whose scope are all relevant interpersonal relationships, and the cultural and historical setting of the learning process.

5.1.2 Criticisms of applying SCT to SLA

SCT’s model of cognition as distributed, located within cultural networks rather than only within the mind, puts it at odds with the models of cognition more generally assumed within linguistic research. Zuengler & Miller (2006) notes that as a result sociocultural perspectives operate within a parallel and sometimes marginalized world of SLA research, a fact which even Lantolf admits (Lantolf & Pavlenko 1995). It is not surprising that language acquisitionists have offered critiques of the usefulness of Vygotsky’s theories to explain human language development. The critiques which I lay out below apply both to the theoretical assumptions of SCT, as well as to teaching methodologies that purport to be based in Vygotsky’s model of cognition.

5.1.2.1 Representation of metalinguistic knowledge

Most critiques of SCT center on its conceptualization of cognition, and specifically metalinguistic knowledge. Proponents of explicit learning, such as DeKeyser, note that one can acquire communicative proficiency even when completely removed from a sociocultural setting in which the target language is being authentically used. In some ways continuing the tradition of grammar-translation method (Dodson 1967), Robert DeKeyser (2007) argues that automatization which comes through practice is an essential component of developing L2 proficiency. Bill VanPatten, in his Input Processing model (2007), argues that if input is carefully presented, in line with the processing constraints of the human brain, learners are able to make use of input to refine
their working model of the second language grammar, their interlanguage. Greg Thomson himself, the designer of the Growing Participator Approach, agrees that an “exquisite capacity” interlanguage can develop in a learner, completely removed from the sociocultural setting of the host language, by means of internally-represented metalinguistic knowledge:

It is quite possible for someone to develop a lot of speaking ability with a small amount of actual exposure to a language, and then do a lot of wondering. **Analytically oriented language learners** in particular can learn a stock set of structural frames and learn to substitute vocabulary into the various slots in those frames. With a vocabulary of a few hundred words, and a collection of a few dozen sentence patterns, and lots of experience at constructing sentences, a linguist/language learner can develop an **exquisite capacity** for expressing any imaginable meaning with amazingly limited resources. I know. I have been there. (Thomson 2000a, bold is mine)

Thomson views this ability to construct an interlanguage, scaffolded on metalinguistic representations, as limited to “analytically-oriented learners” or “linguists”. Indeed, as I will show in Chapter 6, many of my participants’ criticisms of the GPA and sociocultural theory in generally, stem from their stated analytical skills or linguistic orientation.

Most methodologies which purport to be rooted in sociocultural theory eschew pedagogical practices which highlight internal metalinguistic representations, such as using translations, mnemonic devices, conjugation practices, grammatical or lexical drilling. They also eschew pedagogical practices which promote the external representation of metalinguistic knowledge, including textbooks, grammatical charts, vocabulary lists, dictionaries, and other staples of the language classroom (although the GPA does advocate using a running vocabulary chart called a “lexicarry”). In sociocultural pedagogies, these artifacts are seen as being unneeded, since linguistic
knowledge resides in the network of target language speakers, or even unhelpful, distracting learners from production-in-interaction. In her testimonial about the transformation of an Amharic language school in Addis Ababa from a cognitivist to a sociocultural perspective, Østby (2010) highlighted the removal from the school of all such artifacts, which served as external “containers” of metalinguistic knowledge. Instead, learners relied on audio files which they created, and internal presentations of the language mediated through L1 self-talk, wordless pictures, dolls and other objects, and conversations with host nationals, to organize their target language knowledge. Yet external representation is a part of other applications of SCT, such as McKendree et al. (2002) who demonstrates its role in operationalizing knowledge, such as an abacus or times-table used in learning math. Such tools would also almost certainly be necessary, even within sociocultural theory, to learn practices such as literacy, which is seen in sociocultural SLA pedagogy as strongly distinct from oral language use. Østby’s school deferred the teaching of Amharic literacy until a degree if spoken proficiency was achieved, to decouple language learning from the different task of learning to read and write.

5.1.2.2 Strong analogy to children’s learning

Another criticism of applying SCT to adult second language acquisition is its strong analogy to children’s learning. In sociocultural theory, adults learn in much the same way as children, and language learning is often explicitly reframed as a return to childlike learning. In sociocultural theory (Lantolf 2007), a learner begins by being object-regulated, depending on physical objects in the world to mediate cognition. Then a learner becomes other-regulated, relying on the expertise or assistance of another in order
to complete the desired cognition. A task which cannot be accomplished except with assistance from a more competent other is said to be in the learners “zone of proximal development” (Kinginger 2001). Finally, a learner uses the “I-me conversation” (Lantolf 2011), to move toward self-regulation, whereby a learner can complete the desired cognition autonomously. This process of moving from object- to other- to self-regulation is held to be true of both child and adult learning, and applicable to learning in many different fields. According to this logic, language is not viewed as innate or exceptional as the generativists claim (Pinker 1994). The connection between sociocultural methodologies and child learning is not lost on participants trained in these methods. Jean, participating in the PILAT training program, states “this method (PILAT) would work for the kids for sure, but maybe not for me an adult”.

In the following extract, Mary is trying to persuade the StepOut participants that listening should be the primary focus of their host language learning attempts. This emerges from the GPA’s statement of basic principles, stating that “as with young children, you must listen, listen, listen before you speak”, a philosophy which relates to Krashen’s strong analogy “silent period” (Krashen 1982). A participant tries to align with Mary, by saying that listening is how children learn. Since it had been established earlier in the conversation that children are successful language learners, the “listen first” approach of sociocultural theory is linked to successful language learning, and not “wasted time”.

P: That’s how children learn – they start by listening.
M: That’s right; they spend the first usually three to six months of their lives silent pretty much. Well, they cry. And studies have shown, I do not know how to say this exactly, but in newborns, I do not even know how they do this, but they can tell that newborns have the capacity to speak if they were to understand and hear and produce any sound in
the world, but by age six months their brain has narrowed down because of what they’ve been hearing for six months … so that’s not wasted time, is it? Their brain is really processing an enormous amount of language and information even though they’re crying and pooping and whatever, they’re processing.

(Mary and participant, lecture, StepOut 2011)

Here a fact of L1 acquisition, the process of narrowing required to construct the phoneme set of the native language (Jusczyk 1993), is used as justification for a certain ideology of adult language acquisition.

Silverstein (2003:23) speaks of “pregnant imagery”, which becomes “retroactively necessary” allowing people to recognize different pieces of data “as so many examples of one underlying principle, conceptually implicit, even immanent” (Carr 2010:37). The pregnant image helps the “whole analogy seem to make sense” (Carr 2010:37). The image of the child-like learner functions as a “pregnant image” in the StepOut training. Using the image of adults learning the way a child does, Mary co-opts adults’ experiences watching children learn their native languages quickly and fully, and uses them to justify and naturalize the claims which are made by the GPA. If asked directly “Do you learn the same way a two-year child does?”, most participants would probably have said no. But once the pregnant image of the child-like language learner is held up, learners are more willing to accept otherwise debatable claims.

Observations about child learning appear not only in the official StepOut training, but also in narrative interviews, and seem to be influential in shaping the second language learning of my participants. This use of child language acquisition observations to prescribe adult language learning behavior is rooted in the strong analogy position embedded within sociocultural theory, which sees child and adult language learning to be part of a continuous and universally applicable model of human cognition.
5.2 Attractiveness of SCT to the Missions/Development Enterprise

Pedagogical techniques rooted in sociocultural theory are not yet in the mainstream. These techniques are very difficult to implement in the foreign language classroom setting, as they assume that speakers will be authentically embedded in a culture which speaks the target language, and that there is a many-to-one speaker to learner ratio. This has limited not only the adoption of these methodologies, but the fact that much SLA research is still conducted out of university language programs (Lantolf 1996, Watson-Gegeo 2004) may partially explain why these methods have been little researched. The missions-development enterprise however is adopting these methods widely, despite the lack of studies on their effectiveness in academic journals. The field-based learning opportunities provide the authentic sociocultural setting and many-to-one speaker/learner ratio needed for these methods to be adopted effectively. Besides this fact, other theoretical orientations of SCT make it attractive to the missions and development enterprise.

5.2.1 Ethnographically informed relationship building

The first reason such organizations are attracted to SCT is its focus on building ethnographically informed relationships. As van der Geest (1990) notes, the missions enterprise has much in common with ethnography. The success of field workers’ projects depends on their depth of cultural insight, and ability to construct a legitimate role for themselves within the host culture. James Lantolf (1999), the main advocate of applying SCT to SLA, argues for the teaching of ethnographically-informed culture and the shift toward languaculture acquisition advocated by Agar (1994, 2008). Greg Thomson (2000a), appropriates James Spradley’s (1979) equation of ethnography and language
learning, stating that a learner’s “progress in comprehension ability depends to a significant degree on acquiring cultural knowledge” (4th section). In fact, Thomson overtly claims to ground the GPA’s language pedagogy in Spradley’s ethnographic methodology, which was influenced by ethnosience and ethnosemantic approaches in linguistic anthropology from the 1960s, in that it involves describing social situations.

You will have been compiling a list of social situations. A social situation is a recurring state of affairs that can be defined in terms of regular participants, locations, props, etc. An interchange between a villager and a traveling merchant with a wagon of wares might be a social situation. There are hundreds of social situations which can be identified in any culture. You will use your list of social situations as the basis for conversations with your [language helper]. You may ask a question about a typical instance of a social situation (“What goes on when a merchant comes to a house in the village?”), or about a specific instance (“Tell me all about the last time a merchant came to your house”). The responses are tape recorded and added to your comprehensible corpus. You will go over the tapes, identifying incomprehensible details, and clarifying them, making relevant notes. You will listen to the tapes privately until they are easy to comprehend”. (Thomson 2000a, fourth section “Getting Serious”)

For missions/development agencies, this kind of language learning kills two birds with one stone. A learner not only gains host language proficiency, but the input is focused on learning the “appropriate” way to use language in any given social situation, lending the missionary or development worker more legitimacy. As discussed in Section 4.3.3, the goal of acquiring heart language is not only to talk about “a wagon of wares”, but to share life stories - creating trust between a missionary and a host national, and opening the door for a conversation about the deepest levels of worldview (Kwast 1981). Thomson (2000a) makes this goal overt: “the grandest grand tour question is ‘Tell me what happens through the course of a typical lifetime’. A specific form of the question would be ‘Tell
me the whole story of your life as you can remember it.’ This can generate a lengthy text indeed. This is an important kind of text”.

5.2.2 Apprentice posture

Vygotsky (1978) uses the term “apprentice in thinking” to describe the learner and their relationship to older and more skilled members of society. This “apprenticeship”, which underlies sociocultural theory, and its models of other-regulation and the zone of proximal development, was highlighted by Greg Thomson in the GPA manual. Mary also brings this up in the StepOut training, “language is not a thing that you need to get, but rather it’s a life in which host people are the experts and we need them to apprentice us into their life”. She then links apprenticeship to discourses of “communing” which are highly valued in the missions and development community.

Mary tells the StepOut participants:

So communing, it needs to be a part of all of our approaches. Whatever we end up doing, I think it’s really a key part, at least to missionary language learning. People can learn a language using other things and not commune, but in order to be who you want to be, to be the good news in someone else’s language and culture, there needs to be communing. (Mary, lecture, StepOut 2010)

This “apprentice” posture is seen as opening the door then for “being the good news” in someone else’s language and culture, an underlying goal of missions and development agencies. Writers like Snow (2001), explicitly advocate such a posture as the antidote to Western imperialism and ethnocentrism. By positioning language learners as “willing listeners”, sociocultural methodologies are congruent with Christian ideals of humility, being “quick to listen, slow to speak” (James 1:19, NIV). Indeed the goal of the Toronto Institute of Linguistics, to “help end ethnocentric pride and narcissism, racial bigotry and mono-cultural blindness” (Burnett 2011) made sociocultural theory attractive to the
methodologies which evolved from that institute.

5.2.3 Aptitude, attainment and recruiting

In sociocultural theory, language aptitude is not within the scope of the theory. As aptitude is an individual, internal cognitive variable, it is not easily dealt with in a model of external, socially-mediated cognition. The interest in sociocultural theories within SLA was partly in response to the aptitude studies in the 1960s (Carroll & Sapon 1959) or “good language learner” studies of the 1970s (Rubin 1975, Stern 1975). Norton & Toohey (2001) reinterpreted the “good language learner” data in terms of sociocultural variables such as identity and investment, as opposed to an individual cognitive variable. This downplaying of language aptitude is very attractive to missions and development agencies for recruiting purposes. Unlike the Department of Defense, which assigns learners to languages at its Defense Language Institute based on the results of the Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB), these NGOs do not use aptitude in decisions about where to send a field worker, and in fact do not attempt to measure aptitude. Since these organizations rely on volunteers, who raise their own support, if a learner feels “called” to Japan, despite having a low language aptitude, there is no financial motivation to stop that person from raising support, moving to Japan, and attempting to learn Japanese. David, an International Staff with Love the World explained it this way: “In (Love the World), even with no language aptitude, God can still use you”. His colleague Simon concurred, although he disagrees with this approach.

It feels more sensitive when its God’s call on your lives [for Love the World] to say- ahh you were wrong, God does not really want you to be here. But I think that’s great [that the military takes people’s aptitudes into account]- I think taking some of those things into consideration before people are sent is good. I think you can look at beforehand to help think
how successful someone’s gonna be in it. (Simon, Country Z, field interview, 2010)

Miriam Jerome, a professional counselor for field workers who chose to abandon the field, also notes that missions and development agencies are hesitant to consider aptitude because of the question of calling.

In some agencies, people do take tests to see if they are good at (language learning)- often these tests show aptitude- determine where they are supposed to be sent in terms of difficulty of the language. Do you not go to a country “God has called you to” because of that? What if the mission agency says “go”, they feel “God has called them” but it’s clearly not a good fit because of personality flaws? Not only are they not going to make it, but they are actually doing HARM by being there. (Miriam Jerome, personal communication)

However, she falsely assumed that pre-field language acquisition training centers such as MTI or the Center for Intercultural Training would use some measure of language aptitude as part of the pre-field orientation. Both of these organizations avoid language aptitude assessments for the reasons she states.

Greg Thomson subtitles his Growing Participator Approach with “How to Learn a Language for Sure!” a claim which can be made by explicitly downplaying aptitude. “Occasionally I hear of someone who ‘just cannot learn languages.’ I say give me that person, a couple of native speaking [language helpers], and eighteen months, and I will show you a successful language learner. The comprehensible corpus cannot be the whole answer. But it could be a whole lot of the answer” (Thomson 2000a). Maximum Impact Language Learning, a pre-field language acquisition training program which trains field workers from Australia to use sociocultural methods, boldly proclaims on its website “equipping everybody no matter what their ability” (mill.org.au). If anyone can learn the host language fluently as long as they are authentically embedded in the host culture, an
organization is absolved from testing for aptitude, or having difficult conversations with volunteers about field placements. Learning Georgian, Hungarian or Japanese would, in such a view, not be fundamentally different in terms of cognition from learning Spanish, French or German, and learners of any aptitude can be sent to any field site and guaranteed success.

Such flexibility also makes sociocultural methodologies attractive to missions agencies. As sociocultural methodologies like Barefoot, LAMP, PILAT and the GPA are primarily a set of conversations to be had, stories to be told, tasks to be accomplished, they are non-language specific. There is no textbook or instructional materials other than the recordings and word lists generated by the learner from interacting with a native speaker. This saves learners, who are raising their own support, a great deal of money, and allows an agency to train its workers in a common methodology, regardless of which language they are being sent to learn.

5.3 The Growing Participator Approach of Greg Thomson

The GPA, sometimes called the Thomson method (e.g. Caasi 2005), has been adopted in language schools and missions and development agencies across the globe, praised in works such as Lomen (2007) (a list of sources for the GPA is presented in Appendix C). The use of the word “participator” is intentional, and positions learners using other methods as dependent consumers, at the whim of programmatic forces of curricula and textbooks. The GPA involves a kind of therapeutic retraining, equipping learners to take agency and ownership over their own learning. The approach, which is really a pedagogical program, consciously anchors itself in sociocultural theory. The
following extracts explain the origin of the name, connecting it to Vygotsky’s sociocultural theory.

The **sociocultural nature** of language learning: Language is not separate from the way of life (culture) that it supports and that it depends on, nor is it separable from the concrete activities of the people, nor from their specific interpersonal relationships. To learn a language is to be **nurtured or apprenticed** into the life-world of individual host people and groups. Therefore, in this approach we commonly speak of “**growing participators**” rather than “language learners”. (Thomson 2007)

The sociocultural dimension of languaculture learning/growth is the fundamental one, and the natural starting point. For this, we **draw on Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory**, and especially on the concepts of **mediation** and the **growth zone** (ZPD) (Wertsch, 1991), along with the understanding of language learning as participation (Sfard, 1998; Norton, 2000), seeing language not as fundamentally “a collection of things (grammatical concepts, word patterns, etc.) for the learner to collect, absorb and assimilate,”” (Benson & Lor 1999) but rather as “an environment to which the learner must be responsive in order to learn” (ibid.). (Thomson 2012)

The methodology primarily involves working with a hired language helper, called the nurturer, with who the language learner completes a curriculum of jointly-performed language tasks. Like many pedagogical methodologies, the GPA uses jargon, such as “nurturer” and “supercharged”, which both renders complicated terms from SLA into simple English, and also gives an impression of effectiveness.

Host people who especially help growing participators to grow we **call “nurturers”**. We grow into host life by participating in it. However, participation at the right level for early growth is only occasionally possible. In order to get more of it, we hire nurturers who will give us rich concentrated opportunities to participate in their world. Our sessions with such nurturers we **call “supercharged** participation sessions” (Thomson 2007).

The GPA is not published or for sale. The materials come in the form of a collection of electronic files: articles written by Thomson, summaries of the philosophical approaches, a schedule of activities to be completed at various phases, and sample materials to be
used in the exercises. The materials are made available to those who complete a formal two-week training session. However the collections of electronic files which constitute the GPA (Appendix C) are circulated widely from missionary to missionary via file-sharing software and thumb drives. Greg Thomson is not aiming to financially profit from the distribution of materials, so field workers feel comfortable circulating materials. The GPA materials were distributed to StepOut participants via a large print binder containing printouts of the various files. At the StepOut training in 2011, new International Staff were introduced to the GPA humorously. 

So some of the principles of the growing participator approach – some of the ideas behind it – are listed on page 70– the guy who developed this method, his name is Greg Thomson, and he’s got a little PhD in psycholinguistics, which maybe makes you feel like you cannot trust him because he’s psycho, but what it really means is it’s psychology and linguistics and they actually go together and have lots of commonalities and he’s a really smart guy; so you can trust him. (Mary, lecture, StepOut 2011)

Mary’s emphasis of “psycholinguist” is not random. When the GPA is introduced, on the website of the Komensky Arabic Language School for instance, “psycholinguist” is mentioned in a way to give the approach credibility. Their site also purports that the GPA takes everything that science knows about language acquisition into account, including Thompson within the “we” of scientists (underlined).

We use the ‘Growing Participator Approach’ written by a psycholinguist called Greg Thomson. This approach really does take your psyche into account - in a positive way. It takes everything we know in science about language learning and tries to make it work for you. We have taken all this into account, fine-tuned Greg’s approach to suit Jordanian everyday life and are now watching people successfully learning and enjoying their language experience. Some of them the first time in their life! (www.komensky.net/material/gpa/Growing Participator Approach.pdf, April 23, 2013).
Mary presented the GPA to the StepOut participants as representing a consensus in the field, “based on kind of cutting-edge research what we knew about how people learned language” and “widely used among missionaries”. In reality, the GPA is controversial, and its methodologies do not represent a comprehensive picture of the science of SLA, as socioculturally-oriented departments are a minority in the field of SLA. Even among missionary language schools, the GPA is controversial, with many schools resisting its adoption, as evidenced by discussions at the International Congress on Language Learning in October 2010.

5.3.1 Development

As described in Chapter 4.4, the GPA emerged partly out of Thomson’s affiliation with the Toronto Institute of Linguistics and the various strands of non-classroom, field-based, sociocultural pedagogy that emerged from that institute, which had their origins in techniques used at that time by the US military (Dwight Gradin, personal communication). The approach arose from his experiences failing to attain proficiency using grammar-translation approaches, later participation in the TIL, and testing his method by learning several other languages in the field, including Kazakh. Heidi Caasi (2005) describes Thomson’s experiences with overt representations of metalinguistic knowledge and explicit learning.

In 1967, Thomson wrote out his five-month language learning goals (Thomson, 2000b). He planned to learn a Native American language, Blackfoot using the Audiolingual approach, during summer vacation and expected with confidence to become a Blackfoot speaker during this time. To his surprise, he met with minimal success; he learned about 50 to 100 survival expressions alongside a lot of nouns, verb paradigms, and adjectives. Five years later, he came back to his unmet goal of becoming a speaker of Blackfoot. He again learned more verb paradigms and after a few months could still understand almost nothing spoken in Blackfoot. He became quite discouraged and considered giving up until
he heard an inspirational talk on language learning. “As long as I continue to learn, I will eventually arrive”, he thought. And so he continued his Audiolingual approach. He constructed dialogues, had them translated, and memorized them. He made up language drills, and was very dedicated to his task of learning Blackfoot. He kept on learning and learning – typically in his windowless, basement study. After nine more months, he still saw no improvement in his ability to speak Blackfoot.

Finally, a friend challenged him to only speak Blackfoot to native speakers of Blackfoot. He found a Blackfoot speaker to be his language helper and from that point on began a slow but successful communicative journey to joining the Blackfoot speech community. Since that point, Thomson has gone on to learn several other languages successfully. (Caasi 2005, 3-4)

The transition from the “minimal success” in the first paragraph to “successful journey in the second” is framed by Caasi as a move from linguistic to sociocultural approaches. Thomson describes his history with language learning, by speaking of such phases, on the GPA blog.


In his earlier published work, Thomson is clearly influenced by Stephen Krashen. Caasi notes that “Thomson borrows many of his ideas from Krashen (1981) in his quest to find a method that both honors current research and remains flexible” (2005:21). A quote from an early formulation of Thomson’s own language learning philosophy confirms this.

Stephen Krashen (1985), (1987) has suggested that the way people acquire languages is, practically speaking, incredibly simple. Instead of three main principles, he boils it down to only one: people acquire language automatically as a result of understanding messages. This is known as the input hypothesis. It is a daring hypothesis, and it has not won wide support in its extreme form. (Thomson 1993)
What was “daring” about the input hypothesis, a subtenet of Krashen’s larger Monitor Hypothesis (1982), was that it sidelined activities which sought to overtly represent metalinguistic knowledge, either internally or externally. Indeed the “Natural Approach” to language learning (Krashen and Terrell 1983) which emerged from Krashen’s work, sought to avoid overt focus on linguistic forms (although Long (1996) claimed that some focus on linguistic form, arising in communication, was consistent with the input hypothesis). Thomson seems to have largely adopted Krashen’s assumptions about language learning, combining them with Vygotsky’s theories of interaction, cultural historical situatedness, distributed cognition and learning within the ZPD. Krashen does not refer to Vygotsky’s work or sociocultural theory in his own theories. Thomson also studied under Bill VanPatten during his “psycholinguistics phase” and claims to have incorporated his insights on attention and processing (VanPatten 1984, 1990, VanPatten & Sanz 1995) into his method (Thomson, personal communication).

5.3.2 Theoretical assumptions of the GPA

Although presented by Mary, and by language schools who have appropriated the GPA, as representing the accepted current scientific knowledge on adult language acquisition, foregrounding the word “psycholinguist” in describing Greg Thomson, a careful analysis of the GPA user guides, accompanying learning philosophy statements, and actual activities reveals that several controversial assumptions are being made about how adult language learning best proceeds. Thomson’s first formulation of the GPA elaborated four foundational principles of language acquisition: Communing, Understanding, Talking and Evolving, the so called “CUTE” principles (presented in Appendix B). In a later formulation (Thomson 2007), CUTE was changed to CUTER by
adapting Campbell’s (2006) work on the “redemptive dimension” of language learning, a theologically-oriented philosophy of language learning which is directly influenced by both sociocultural theory and evangelical missiology (Winter et al. 1992). This last dimension makes the GPA especially attractive to Christian missions and development organizations, as it overtly aligns its language learning goals with those organization’s social and evangelistic goals. Caasi (2005) extracted from Thomson’s descriptions of each of the CUTE principles the assumptions about language acquisition being made, as presented in Table 5.1.
### Table 5.1: Fundamental claims about Language Acquisition in the GPA (from Caasi 2005, adapted from Thomson 1999).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Claim</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Second language acquisition occurs through comprehension of real messages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Messages must contain input that is a little more than the level the learner currently understands.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Acquisition occurs when the learner is focusing on something other than acquisition (i.e. focus on the message).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Second language acquisition occurs when the learner is not ‘on the defensive’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>The learning environment should be comfortable and should keep anxiety levels low.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Second language acquisition produces listening skills prior to speaking skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Learners should be given a “silent period”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Second language acquisition is not conscious interaction with/awareness of grammar rules.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Consciously learned grammar is a tool for specific tasks, such as writing and editing, and should be used when time allows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Second language acquisition does involve the acquisition of grammatical structures, generally in a predictable order. However, this does not mean we should try to teach grammar according to this order.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Subconsciously acquired language is responsible for initiating utterances and for fluency.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Conscious learning does have a role, but not a central role, in second language acquisition.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Second language acquisition does not require tedious drilling.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Production develops gradually and is not taught directly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Second language acquisition takes time and develops slowly/subtly as opposed to learning which can be fast/obvious for some people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>Focus of study should remain on receiving quality input, not on receiving error correction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Activities should be adjusted to keep the learner comprehending and processing target language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 5.3.2.1 Theoretical claims rooted in Krashen’s Monitor Hypothesis

Far from representing “everything we know about how adults learn language”, second language acquisitionists would find many of the assumptions in the table above to be controversial, and a bold assertion on the part of Thomson. While Claim 17 is fairly uncontroversial among language pedagogy researchers, Claim 15, which recapitulates Krashen’s (1982) Acquisition-Learning hypothesis, is an extremely bold one. Krashen
holds that “learning” refers to metalinguistic knowledge, knowledge about language, and that “language learning” impedes true “language acquisition” which is the implicit, inducted growth of a second language grammar. While generally held to be an accurate distinction in child language acquisition, this tenet of the Monitor Hypothesis is controversial in stating that “acquisition”, the subconscious, induced creation of a second language grammar, is possible at all for adults, something which Schachter (1988) and Bley-Vroman (1989) would deny.

As Gregg (1984) notes, the Acquisition-Learning Hypothesis gives more power to the Language Acquisition Device (LAD) than even Chomsky does in his formulation of generative approaches to language acquisition. Chomsky said that LAD describes only the initial state of child learners, and thus is inaccessible to adult learners. CLAIM 15 then is a denial of the critical period hypothesis and the assumptions of generative linguists about the loss of access to the language acquisition device (although see White 2003 for arguments on retained partial access to Universal Grammar in adult learners). CLAIM 15 is therefore consistent with the “strong analogy” position of sociocultural theory, that adult language learning somehow proceeds in the same way as child language learning, and that if adults are exposed to the same kinds of authentic input and interaction, that they will acquire language as successfully as children, a claim held out by organizations and language programs when advocating for the GPA.

Several other claims are clearly adapted from Stephen Krashen’s Monitor Hypothesis (1982) and its associated “communicative approaches” to language pedagogy, various assumptions of which have been criticized by a large number of SLA researchers. CLAIMS 6 and 7 describe Krashen’s Silent Period hypothesis. This aspect of the GPA
differentiates it from other approaches descended from the Toronto of Institute of Linguistics, such as PILAT or LAMP. In presenting the GPA at StepOut, Mary explained her doubts about the Silent Period, distancing herself from the GPA, yet how she came to align with the GPA because it is “research”, and now sees the Silent Period as a “gift.”

I used to fight with this, because LAMP gets you out there and you’re talking on day one, and I have seen people who are afraid to talk and they kind of let other people do their talking for them. And that becomes a habit and pretty soon they’re stuck in this “I cannot talk this language”. So I like people to talk quickly, but in wrestling with all this and understanding the research, I would agree now with this Growing Participator Approach that would say that you really need a quiet period or a listening time at the front end. So if you’re a beginner, you have kind of a gift, and allow your brain to just go in and spend the first – they suggest about 30 hours of intensive language time doing a lot of listening exercises. (Mary, lecture, StepOut 2010)

Because Mary equates the GPA with “the research” she submits her own preferences to scientific knowledge. However the benefit of a Silent Period is not universally accepted by SLA researchers (Ellis 2008b:74). Proponents of the Output hypothesis (Swain 2000) and Skill Acquisition Theory (DeKeyser 2001, Laufer & Hulstijn 2001) would both cite studies showing the importance of speaking in the development of readily accessible second language knowledge.

CLAIM 1 is a restatement of Krashen’s Input Hypothesis. CLAIM 2 is Krashen’s i+1 Hypothesis. CLAIMS 4 and 5 are Krashen’s Affective Filter hypothesis, And CLAIMS 9 and 12 present Krashen’s Non-Interface hypothesis (Krashen 1993), a sub-tenet of the acquisition-learning hypothesis, whereby overtly “learned” metalinguistic knowledge does not cross over into or interface with the body of “acquired” organically induced language knowledge out of which spontaneous verbal production is drawn, as described in CLAIM 11. Thomson is deeply suspicious of the usefulness of conscious representations
(internal or external) of metalinguistic knowledge for gaining proficiency. He clearly states this in CLAIM 8 and 12, which are in accordance with the Non-Interface and Acquisition-Learning hypotheses. Interestingly, sociocultural theory is silent about the usefulness of conscious representations of metalinguistic knowledge as a form of mediation.

In summary, the GPA assumes that certain kinds of pedagogical intervention may be most helpful in aiding language acquisition. Both child and adult language acquisition are held to be roughly comparable, both driven by comprehensible input in interaction (CLAIM 1), input which is discourse based and heavily narrative in character. In the GPA, a language helper is responsible for providing input and ensuring that it is comprehensible (CLAIM 2). The method avoids drawing explicit connections between the forms in the target language and L1 forms.

Finding out a translation equivalent can indeed be a step toward being able to attach significance to expressions used in real contexts. Nevertheless, I have nothing further to say about that approach to making input comprehensible. Instead, I am interested in making the target language more directly comprehensible in its own right, as a referential and interactional system. (Thomson 2000a)

Indeed all conscious representations of internal and external knowledge are avoided in the pedagogy (CLAIMS 8-12). It is not surprising that assessments would also be avoided, as assessment has the potential to raise “the affective filter” (CLAIMS 4, 5), comes close to drilling (CLAIM 14) or error correction (CLAIM 16), and inherently relates to metalinguistic knowledge (CLAIMS 8-12).

Despite a robust vein of studies critical of Krashen’s hypotheses (Gregg 1984, White 1987, McLaughlin 1987, Gregg 1989, Ellis 1990, Larsen-Freeman & Long 1991), I observed a high regard for Krashen’s work across many nodes of the assemblage of
missionary language described in Figure 4.3. At the ICLL conference, the Non-Interface and Acquisition-Learning hypotheses were assumed in many of the presentations. When I raised the possibility that adult language learning may be of a completely different nature than child language acquisition, due to critical period effects and the shutdown of access to the language acquisition device, this was a new and controversial idea, even though it is certainly a familiar claim to SLA researchers. The academic language acquisitionists at the ICLL conference, when asked to present the latest developments in the field to the delegates, covered primarily sociocultural and socialization-based studies of SLA. Work which would incorporate overt representations of metalinguistic knowledge, such as Skill-Acquisition Theory, Connectionist Theory or even Input Processing was absent from these reports as well as from the presentations of the delegates. In fact there were several presentations highly critical of “linguistics”, by which they meant appeals to metalinguistic knowledge in language pedagogy.

When interviewing field workers in other organizations who had completed Masters degrees in language acquisition from Biola University or Wheaton College, influential evangelical academic centers, these workers drew almost exclusively on Krashen’s work when describing to me how language acquisition works. These facts lead me to conclude that “strong analogy” positions, which posit “acquisition” (subconscious, inducted, input-driven learning) as being possible for adult learners are more widely adopted within the assemblage of missionary language learning than in the field of SLA as a whole. Possible reasons may be philosophical influence of the Toronto Institute of Linguistics, a backlash against the highly metalinguistic descriptive methods practiced by SIL linguists and their affiliated Bible translators, or a more base level congruence
between theological positions adopted by Christians and theoretical assumptions of Vygotskian and Krashenesque pedagogical approaches.

5.3.2.2 Theoretical assumptions rooted in Vygotskian Sociocultural Theory

Even though the assumptions of the GPA seem heavily drawn from Krashen, Thomson clearly bases his approach in sociocultural theory. In my analysis, one primary point of connection seems to be the idea of “languaculture”, that language and culture are inseparable (Agar 1994, 2008). Every GPA task consists of exposure to linguistic forms as the language helper describes some element of the host culture. The emphasis is not on acquisition of forms, but in establishing a “normal” and “native-like” target language identity, “the preferable scenario would have the adult language learner receive enough exposure to a language that s/he develops a more native-like feel for what is normal and what is abnormal” (Thomson 2007).

Another point of connection is conceptualizing learning as involving mediation, mediation which moves from object-regulation to other-regulation to self-regulation.

We humans do not experience the world directly, but rather our experience of it is *mediated*—reaching us (or we reaching it) through intermediate *means*, which intervene between the world and us, in the process, altering what we take the world to be. Preeminent among those *mediational means* are tools (such as hammers, roads, houses) and symbols (such as spoken words). (Thomson 2012, “Mediation and THEY Stories”, italics in original)

Mediation via tools such as pictures or the manipulation of physical objects such as toys, dolls and blocks, relating to Vygotsky’s (1978) object-regulation, is the first stage of language acquisition in the GPA.

So at the outset, you need visual aids if the input is to be comprehensible. During the first month or two of language learning it is possible to learn a
lot of language through methods involving \textit{physical responses} to instructions, warnings, predictions, and so forth. It is possible to learn a wide range of both vocabulary and grammatical constructions through such methods. (Thomson 2000a)

Thomson explicitly links this object-regulated stage of learning to the “total physical response” pedagogical techniques advocated by Asher (1969, 1993), whereby learning which is incarnated in body movements is held to be better retained than learning which is purely cognitive. As in SCT, the GPA is summarized by Thomson as being primarily about using the host culture’s “native and natural” means of mediating cognition.

In brief, the GP is being nurtured and then apprenticed into using the host mediational means—story constructing pieces—in the way that they are used in the lived story of host people. (Thomson 2012, “Mediation and THEY Stories”)

This apprenticeship involves moving from using objects to listening to others tell stories (other regulation), then co-constructing stories using the appropriate ways of talking about the world. To explain this, Thomson spends a great deal of time explaining the ZPD, which he rebrands the “Growth Zone”.

Therefore, in the GPA, combining the sociocultural and cognitive dimensions we are led to suspect that the most powerful cause of growth in speaking ability is fostered by conversational interaction with host people who \textit{meet us in our growth zone}… as the Growing Participator struggles, a sympathetic host person in \textit{his/her growth zone} steps in and helps out, and success results (Thomson 2012)

The “language nurturer” is arguably the single most important component of the GPA. The nurturer provides input, makes sure it is comprehensible, and serves as the “other” in other-regulation and assisted performance. Thomson, in the following text and picture,
conflates the nurturer’s role with Vygotsky’s description of the mother’s role in child development.

This difference between what a child can do with help and what he or she can do without guidance Vygotsky called the “zone of proximal development” (ZPD). (Vygotsky 1978:85). The Zone of Proximal Development is the child’s potential for growth -- growth from the things he cannot do fully on his own, to the things which he is able to do while in interaction with his nurturer. (Thomson 2007)

![Figure 5.1: Visual representation of the ZPD found in the GPA materials (Thomson 2007)](image)

The analogy between a host language speaker nurturing a field worker and a mother nurturing a child is taken for granted. The field worker is then positioned as a “child”, which in the context of language acquisition means universal attainment of native speaker competence. By applying the ZPD to adult language learning, Thomson is able to promise learners the attainment of fluency through the same means as a child acquires fluency. Mary, in teaching the GPA to StepOut participants, borrows Thomson’s explanation of the ZPD.

Vygotsky who was a Russian, he did some IQ tests with little children and was surprised that it seemed like they couldn’t do as much as he had expected that they could do. And he thought of bringing in their mothers and seeing if their mother was with them while they took the IQ test would
they be better. And he was surprised that not only do they do better; they did a lot better. (Mary, StepOut 2011)

Mary also compares the “language helper’s” role as being like a mother, ensuring that the learner will “do a lot better” if they stay in the “growth zone” by following Thomson’s supercharged listening and talking activities.

One area where the GPA seems to be rooted in Krashenesque thinking, in opposition to sociocultural theory, is in the role of L1 mediation. The GPA seems to agree with Krashenesque models in that the learner’s L1 should be avoided in all situations. L2 forms should be tied directly to meanings, and not to L1-mediated knowledge. Presumably this practice stems from their “strong analogy” stance, that L2 acquisition should proceed just as L1 acquisition did. Yet sociocultural theory does not preclude, and in fact would predict, the usefulness of L1-mediated knowledge to scaffold performance of a task, calling it object mediation. The L1 could pull a task into the ZPD, something a learner is unable to accomplish on their own, but is able to accomplish by resorting to a rule or explanation.

An example of such object mediation is found in Sara’s marginal notes on a handout (Figure 5.2) given during a Slovene lesson on time telling. Next to a box listing examples using the preposition čez (lit. across) Sara writes “until 29 minutes say this” and next to a box with examples using do (until), she writes “anythink[sic] after 31 minutes”. These notes were distilled from L2-mediated input from the tutor, as well her analysis of the handout’s organization. Sara was called upon to say in Slovene the times shown her on a clock by the tutor; she consciously looked at her worksheet and notes, used L1 self talk “let’s see”, and used the external representation of knowledge to produce the correct form. When shown 5:50 on the clock, she used the L2 patterns on her
worksheets, and deductions from her L1 notes, that 50 is “anything after 31 minutes” to produce the form “Ura je 10 do šestih”. In a purely conversational task, Sara would not have been able to produce that form, but using object-mediation, she was able to produce the correct form. If the output or automatization hypotheses are correct, assisted production like this would be useful for acquisition.

**Figure 5.2:** L1 marginal notes serving as object mediation

### 5.3.2.3 Theoretical assumptions rooted in Processing Instruction

In a personal interaction at ICLL 2010, Greg Thomson said that he had worked under Bill VanPatten, and had included his insights into the development of the GPA. As I have seen the GPA implemented, the main theoretical borrowing from VanPatten’s
Processing Instruction (VanPatten and Sanz 1995, VanPatten 2003), a pedagogy based in work on attention-raising and human language processing, is that students demonstrate comprehension of a form non-verbally before they are asked to produce the form verbally.

For example, a Russian speaking nurturer says the following sentence:

\[\text{devushk}.\text{u} \quad \text{bi}.l \text{.}\text{Ø} \quad \text{mal’chik}.\text{Ø}\]
\[\text{girl.OBJ-FEM} \quad \text{hit.PAST-MASC} \quad \text{boy.SUBJ-MASC}\]
\"The boy hit the girl\"

The learners should then demonstrate comprehension of this sentence by having the boy doll hitting the girl doll. This would reveal whether they have correctly processed that the first noun, \"devushku\" in the sentence is the object, as marked by case endings and gendered verbal morphology, and not the subject, which would be the interpretation if following the First Noun Principle (Van Patten 2003:15). A learner has to have correctly processed the morphology in order to demonstrate the correct scenario. If a learner were asked to attempt speaking before non-verbally demonstrating comprehension, the learner could say \"devushku bil mal’chik\”, which actually means \"the boy hit the girl\”, while thinking that they were communicating \"the girl hit the boy\”. The following sentence:

\[\text{devushk}.\text{a} \quad \text{bi}.l\text{.a} \quad \text{mal’chik}.\text{a}\]
\[\text{girl.SUBJ-FEM} \quad \text{hit.PAST.FEM} \quad \text{boy.OBJ-MASC}\]
\"The girl hit the boy\"

The content morphemes are in the same order, and only the inflectional endings are different. The language nurturer would not be able to determine if the learner had correctly interpreted the sentence \"devushku bil mal’chik\”, unless asked to demonstrate the intended meaning non-verbally.

While this demonstration aspect of Processing Instruction is incorporated into the GPA, others are not. VanPatten claims that forms are acquired in a natural order
(Krashen’s (1982) Natural Order Hypothesis) and that acquisition will be most efficient if the forms are presented in this order. Thomson on the other hand, in Claim 10, states: “Second language acquisition does involve the acquisition of grammatical structures, generally in a predictable order. However, this does not mean we should try to teach grammar according to this order”.

Processing Instruction involves many principles of human language processing, principles to which Thomson does not overtly refer, and only some of which does he incorporate into the design. VanPatten’s Primacy of Content Words Principle, P1a, (2003:14) seems built in, as nouns and verbs are the first and most salient vocabulary items introduced in each activity. The remaining principles (P1b–f), such as the Sentence Location Principle, are not obviously incorporated. Nurturers are not asked to put the target form in the salient sentence-initial position, to aid language learners’ attention and processing. Rather, a nurturer’s primary directive is to say whatever feels natural, irrespective of whether or not it is easier or harder for the learner to parse.

5.3.3 Pedagogical design

The actual pedagogical implementation of these principles is on the one hand simple, and on the other hand very complex. Every pedagogical intervention is basically an exercise where a learner is first exposed to a native speaker who completes a discursive task, often with the help of a visual or tangible aid. Then the learner completes the same task by relying on the native speaker for help (assisted performance). Often, the tasks are designed so that the language learners are able to complete a version of the task non-verbally, revealing whether or not they correctly comprehended the task, before completing the task verbally. This aspect of the design is taken from VanPatten’s
processing instruction, wherein an instructor has students non-verbally show whether or not they have correctly processed a form before they are asked to produce it. Finally, the language learner attempts to initiate or complete the discursive task on their own with little overt feedback or error correction given.

A beginning-level assignment would perhaps have a toy frog and a toy chair. The nurturer would pick up each object and say the name of the object in the target language, forming a link between the target language form and the real world concept, not an L1 equivalent. The native speaker would then say the name of the object, and the language learner would have to grab the object named, as a form of comprehension check. Finally the language learner would produce the linguistic form, the nurturer only providing assistance when needed, and the nurturer would grab the object, to signal to the language learner whether the intended meaning was conveyed. More complex forms such as “the frog is on the chair”, “the chair is on the frog”, “the frog jumps over the chair” could be introduced; the nurturer would create the scenario while producing the linguistic forms, then the nurturer would use just the linguistic form, while the learner reproduced the physical scenario. Finally the learner would attempt to produce the linguistic forms, with assistance as needed, and the nurturer would reproduce the scenario to signal to the learner whether the intended meaning was conveyed.

5.3.3.1 Six stages of the GPA

The GPA is divided into six stages. In each stage, learners perform increasingly native-like discourse tasks. The stages are presented visually and textually as a pathway which ends in fully-ratified participation in the target language community, as seen in Figures 5.3 and Table 5.2.
FIGURE 5.3: The six stages of the GPA as a path, found in the GPA materials
### TABLE 5.2: Descriptions of the Growing Participator Approach’s phases (Thomson 2007)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Phase Name</td>
<td>Here-And-Now Phase</td>
<td>Story-Building phase</td>
<td>Shared-Story Phase</td>
<td>Deep-Life-Sharing Phase</td>
<td>Native-To-Native Resource Phase</td>
<td>Self-Sustaining Growth In Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours In Sessions With A Language Helper</td>
<td>first 100 hours (6% of total Language Sessions)</td>
<td>150 more hours (11% of total Language Sessions)</td>
<td>250 more hours (17% of total Language Sessions)</td>
<td>500 more hours (33% of total Language Sessions)</td>
<td>500 more hours (33% of total Language Sessions)</td>
<td>sessions as needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approximate Vocabulary Gain</td>
<td>first 750 words</td>
<td>1500 more words</td>
<td>1250 more words</td>
<td>2500 more words</td>
<td>3500 more words</td>
<td>increasing by the thousands</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities Of Practice</td>
<td>Goals in this Dimension: To become richly integrated into communities of practice, the smaller networks of relationships within the larger language community. To develop continuity between times spent in a “super-charged” community of practice (my language sessions), and times spent in other communities of practice which allow me opportunities to develop.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Understanding Ability</td>
<td>Goals in this Dimension: To understand most of what all people around me are saying. To be someone to whom people will want to talk.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Talking Ability</td>
<td>Goals in this Dimension: To be able to express my ideas with my own words in culturally and contextually relevant ways. To be someone to whom people will want to listen.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grammar and Phonetic Issues</td>
<td>Goals in this Dimension: To become aware of certain aspects of grammatical form first in comprehension. To use this awareness to make my speech become more native-sounding.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture Learning, Pragmatics</td>
<td>Goals in this Dimension: To know the world as much as possible as it is experienced by host people, in able to fully share life with them through language.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Each phase is quantified—assigned both a number of hours for completion and a vocabulary gain. The system is designed to be used with any language, so the exact vocabulary or grammar structures acquired at each stage is left completely open, and will depend entirely on the discourses that emerge from the language helper. This quantification was seen as a strong point by some StepOut participants, as it helped them see how much work was involved in language learning, and realize how time consuming it would be. The methods of quantification are not directly explained however, and probably not meant to be taken too literally. “Vocabulary” is also ambiguous; it is unclear if the number refers to lexemes or morphemes. The bottom five lines of the chart are explanations of dimensions of language use that are expected to be developing as a learner proceeds through the six stages. “Communities of Practice” is given the privileged position, reflecting sociocultural and functional theories’ emphasis on acquiring language practices, or “languagings” (Swain 2006, Lantolf 2011:171), rather than linguistic forms. “Grammar and Phonetic Issues” are lower in the chart, framed in terms of awareness rather than performance, and in terms of being “native-sounding” rather than being “accurate”.

5.3.3.2 Iceberg principle

“Understanding Ability”, in second position, foregrounds listening and comprehension over production, what Thomson refers to as the “iceberg principle”. In Thomson’s own words the “iceberg principle” is explained as follows:

Growing Participators [should] follow the Iceberg Principle: do not try to memorize ten or fifteen thousand words. Rather, have strong encounters with new words, paying simultaneous attention to sound, meaning and context, and then subsequently you will re-encounter those words in proportion to their frequency in speech. They will eventually rise to the tip of the iceberg, available for use in spoken production. In other words,
applying the Iceberg Principle includes encountering a massive amount of understandable speech over a long period of time. (This process can be strengthened by making special vocabulary-related recordings.) (Italics in original, Thomson 2012, subheading “Knowing Enough Words”)

**Figure 5.4:** Representation of the iceberg principle (Thomson 2012)

This is an application of the Silent Period hypothesis to each lexical item. A learner should hear each new lexical item in a “strong encounter”. More frequent vocabulary items will present a learner with more opportunities for a “strong encounter”, which seems akin to the psycholinguistic notion of “deep processing”, wherein a form is presented in different modalities and must be processed to complete a task (see Dixon & VanEye 1984, Stahl 1986 for early formulations). Frequency is not taken into account overtly within the GPA, in that there is no schedule for presenting high-frequency forms before low-frequency forms. The iceberg principle allows frequency to be accounted for indirectly, in that a word’s ability to move “up the iceberg” is proportional to the number of “strong encounters”. Such encounters would happen more often with high-frequency
forms; even if low frequency forms are present in the input at an early level, there will be fewer “strong encounters” with them.

Thomson claims that a learner can increase the speed a word “moves up the iceberg” by making special vocabulary-related recordings, recordings which constitute a “strong encounter”. In stages 4-6 for instance, the learner is instructed to “ask a host friend to tell you the basic story of their life, capturing it with a recorder as they talk” as Step 1 of a typical Stage 4 activity. Step 2 is for the learner to listen to the recording on their own, identifying words they cannot understand, writing down parts of the story that could be expanded on, and formulating questions to ask the nurturer.

Step 3 is “massaging the recording”, listening to the recording together with the nurturer while pausing the recording often to clarify forms that were not understood “due to a word that is new to you. It may be due to a combination of words that mean something unexpected, or perhaps it will be due to some aspect of host life that you do not understand yet. It may simply be that the pronunciation was not clear enough for you to understand it at your current level of listening ability” (Thomson 2007). All new words are to be kept in a running word diary which each learner has been keeping from the very beginning. Additionally, learners are asked to make their own recordings based on this new vocabulary. For instance, if the nurturer said “we spent two months in the wilderness camping and fishing” and “wilderness” were a new form, the meaning of “wilderness” would first be ascertained via “massaging”. Then the learner would extract the segment of the story where the native speaker used “wilderness”, splicing together a new sound file containing: “Wilderness - We spent two months in the wilderness camping and fishing - wilderness”. This manipulation of recordings to create audio vocabulary lists is a
key aspect of the GPA in every phase, and is designed to create a “strong encounter” with the new form, deep processing which connects form and meaning.

Step 4 involves speaking with the nurturer, asking them to expand the story. This is the first step where the learner spontaneously produces language, using forms that were acquired in previous interactions. The expansions are recorded in Step 5, and Step 6 involves listening again to these expanded recordings. The final step, Step 7 is to summarize and retell the story back to the nurturer. This gives the learner an opportunity to test production, to see “how far up the iceberg the word has risen”. Step 7 is expected to involve other-mediation, relying on the nurturer to complete the retelling in an act of assisted performance. The retelling also is to “help your host friend to feel understood and appreciated”.

5.3.3.3 Focus on narration/discourses

As shown in the sample activity described above, input comes in the form of a “native-like” narrative about some aspect of life that simultaneously provides linguistic input and metaknowledge about the host language culture. This overt cultural learning component makes the method attractive to missions and development organizations. The nurturer never presents language to the learner isolated from its meaning (such as grammar drills) and is always embedded in a discourse about real or imagined experiences in the world of the host culture. The discourse may be simple descriptions of objects at the very early phases, but soon moves into “storying” about life, in more and more complex ways. This focus on language as social actions, not as an internally-referential system of signs, reflects the methods sociocultural basis. Language proficiency in this model then clearly maps on to Kwast’s model of worldview, as presented in Figure
4.2, with a learner’s language progress opening up depths of meaningful storying about the feelings and realities of native speakers in their own culture. The learner’s overriding goal is to learn “native-like ways of telling native-like stories”, which would presumably involve but does not foreground grammatical or formal accuracy. The GPA is often marketed to potential users by emphasizing how the method “does not do grammar” or “repetitive drilling”, “grammar” being a negatively valenced word for many learners. “Storying” has a more positive connotation.

5.3.4 Applying the GPA to a hypothetical language learning problem

The GPA’s overriding focus on using “native-like” constructions and on avoiding at all times the linking of target language forms to L1 forms is presented as a strength, and indeed would have the potential to solve the following type of problem. Mark, an International Staff learning Serbo-Croatian, was asked to give a presentation in Serbo-Croatian at a local university. Mark had been exposed to the GPA at StepOut, and in fact was even trained to teach the method to Brian, Jack and Anelisa at StepOut 2010. Yet he did not use this method in his own learning, but opted instead to use a traditional tutor, who focused on formal accuracy. Mark also learned vocabulary via flash cards and vocabulary lists which connected Serbo-Croatian expressions to English equivalents. During his presentation at the local university, Mark was focused on content, not form. Even though the crowd of students was very impressed by his Serbo-Croatian proficiency, and expressed their delight about it both to me and to Mark, several features were present which are not typical of native Serbo-Croatian, and represent L1 transfer. The verbal ending /–š/ attached to a stem indicates 2nd person singular informal present indicative. /znaš/ means then “you(2SGINF) know”, with /zna-/ being the root “know”. Mark used
/znaš/ several times to mean “you know” in the solidarity eliciting function common in English (“you know, the weather is cold today”). This use of “know” is attested in Serbo-Croatian, but since Mark is addressing an audience that is both plural and a formal setting, a native speaker would have used /znate/, /-te/ being the ending for 2\textsuperscript{nd} person plural and/or 2\textsuperscript{nd} person formal. Mark also used the /-š/ ending to mark an impersonal generic directive “you”, as in “when you make a cake, first you crack an egg”. This impersonal “you” is not a natural way of encoding that function in Serbo-Croatian.

Proponents of the GPA might argue that if he had used the GPA, Mark would have never made this error. He would never have been exposed to these non-standard uses of “-š” in the input, and would have only heard native-like ways of performing those functions. Also, Mark would have never linked /-š/ to the L1 form “you”, which combines formal, informal, generic, singular and plural uses within a single form. GPA proponents would attribute Mark’s overuse of /-š/ to his use of English to scaffold L2 knowledge, leading him into trouble. Presumably if he had used the GPA, he would use only the native-like forms present in the nurturer’s discourse.

Counterarguments could be made however. Generativists would argue that a transfer error like Mark’s use of /znaš/ is a product not of failing to develop native-like habits, but of actual neurological interference between the L1 and L2 grammars. Learners have often been demonstrated to produce forms that they have never heard a L2 speaker use. Even Krashen’s Natural Order Hypothesis would hold that language learners will make errors in certain forms, if they are normally acquired late in the natural order, regardless of how much positive evidence for the correct version they are exposed to.
still might have overused /-š/ for sociocultural reasons. If Mark and his nurturer had been on informal terms (as assumed in Thomson’s calling nurturers “host culture friends”), the input Mark received would have been full of /-š/ endings, and lacking in /-te/ forms used to address plural or formal audiences. Skills gained in one-on-one interactions are not automatically transferable to other social settings that demand a different set of forms and registers. Additionally, even within sociocultural theory, L1 self-talk is shown to be an important form of mediation in the transition from other-regulation to self-regulation (Appel & Lantolf 1994, Aljaafreh & Lantolf 1994, Lantolf & Yanez 2003). The GPA does not theorize the use of L1 self talk or L1-mediated internal representations of target language forms, even though this is a key component of language acquisition in sociocultural theory. Further research needs to be carried out on whether learners who solely used the GPA would make errors such as overusing /-š/, and in what contexts.

5.4 The GPA at StepOut 2010/2011

In Section 5.3, I described the GPA as it is explained in Thomson’s own materials. However, although the International Staff of Love the World received a copy of these materials, what they knew about the GPA came mostly from the lectures about and demonstrations of the GPA which occurred at the StepOut pre-field training. In this section I will analyze how the GPA was actually presented to the Love the World participants, as that had a much greater role in shaping their second language learnerhood than the actual materials themselves. The plan for exposing participants to the GPA at StepOut is roughly summarized in Table 5.3.
### TABLE 5.3: Overview of the language acquisition module of StepOut

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Day one:</th>
<th>Introductory lecture introducing self, the basic philosophical approaches of the GPA, motivating the GPA over academic or “traditional” language learning. Homework to read about the Growing Participator Approach and read “Language Learning is Communication is Ministry”, (Brewster 1997) advocating for sociocultural methods espoused by the Toronto Institute of Linguistics’ descendants, and rooting these methods in Christian missiology.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day two:</td>
<td>Another lecture debriefing the homework articles and covering a basic overview of the GPA’s six phases and methodological approaches. A small activity to demonstrate Phase 1 and Phase 2 activities at tables scattered around the room. Practice using GPA activities with a native (or competent non-native) speaker of each of the target languages, held in a local park. This was to expose people to GPA activities appropriate to the level of language proficiency they currently possessed. Not every target language was able to be practiced however, and the Slovene learners for example, had to practice beginning German activities. The hope was to teach the methodology, not the actual language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Day three:</td>
<td>A lecture the next day debriefing the park experience, highlighting the role of motivation in language learning, and a panel on how to use classroom instruction well. The option of using language coaches was also presented. Participants were asked to devise and turn in a “language learning plan” to a more experienced field worker detailing which methods they wanted to use.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The language learning component is thus a very small piece of the overall six week StepOut training, having been cut from eleven days when the LAMP method was being taught, to three partial days StepOut 2010/2011. The GPA was first introduced to the StepOut participants via an article by Greg Thomson explaining the basics of the approach, and advocating for its use. Mary, the staff worker charged with exposing new staff to the GPA, recognizes the article is insufficient to understand how to use the approach, calling it “a kind of summary” and frames the language learning module in
StepOut as activities which will make the GPA “feel a little bit more comforting and understanding”.

Mary foregrounds her calling, her personal experience and her education in establishing her credibility to the StepOut participants.

God ended up using us and calling us into cross-cultural training and I’ve been the person doing the language training since 1997 – which makes me feel old all of the sudden – so I’ve been here at (StepOut) since I think the first one in ‘99, before they called it StepOut. And I love doing it and that’s why I keep coming back and they keep inviting me back, so it’s nice too. But what I was recently – I just finished my master’s in training teachers of English – I cannot even say it, what I call my master’s – TTESL – oh, ESOL – so TTESOL. (Mary, lecture, StepOut 2011)

This playful joking about the name of her Master's program (underlined text) enacts a certain skeptical stance towards “academics” in language learning, simultaneously accruing credibility from her academic training, but also building solidarity with her participants, and subtly teaching them to question that which is “academic”, something they will be explicitly asked to do as they abandon “academic” habits and adopt the sociocultural approach. When Mary first introduced Greg Thomson and the GPA to the participants, she joked, “and [Greg Thomson]’s got a little PhD in psycholinguistics, which maybe makes you feel like you cannot trust him because he’s psycho, but what it really means is it’s psychology and linguistics”. Mary uses academic credentials for credibility while remaining skeptical of academia’s usefulness, an attitude communicated to participants as part of their socialization into learnerhood. The GPA itself grounds its methods in “academia” by emphasizing Thomson’s formal training and citing scholars like Vygotsky and Krashen, yet positions itself against the dangers of “academic learning” discussed in the following section. Mary may have acquired this stance from the participants at the ICLL Congress; while some academics presented bibliographies on
sociocultural or “languaculture” learning there, “academic” learning, especially involving linguistic description, was presented as unhelpful if not detrimental.

5.4.1 Academic and cognitive learning at StepOut

The GPA involves a high degree of linguistic manipulation and negotiation, with the learner asked to inductively derive analyses from real data. Although rooted in sociocultural theory, which positions cognition as distributed beyond a learner’s mind, individual cognition is involved as learners struggle to make sense of what they are hearing. This cognition is made visible in self-directed and nurturer-directed metalinguistic talk. In the following excerpt, Mary positively links the GPA to “smoothness” and “immersion”, while “academic” or “cognitive” methods are connected to ineffectiveness and even ethnocentrism.

I did go through French Immersion and I would come home from school, my parents would say, “What did you learn in French?” because they were monolingual and always wanted their kids to be bilingual, and I’d say, “I’m not learning French”, and just did not even know you were learning it because it was that smooth” (Mary, lecture, StepOut 2011)

Here Mary describes immersive, content-based learning, where the focus is not on the language (see Claim 3 in Table 5.1) as very positive. On the other hand, in both years she used her experience learning German to present an opposing picture.

I learned German the hard way, where you are in a classroom, with a teacher at the front was the old, old school you know, we had the book in front of us I still remember ‘Er trinkt Milch, der Mann raucht die Pfeife’ you had to memorize all these lines, and if you did not get them right he threw the book at you” (Mary, lecture, StepOut 2010)

I had to learn German and that was a totally different scenario. You know I had an old-school teacher who had quite the temper and he would pull out the little textbook that was well-worn. And anyway, it went on like this and we had to memorize it and if you did not get it right you he’d
chuck his – or if you were talking – he’d chuck his chalk at you. ... I ended up going to Germany on an exchange program and was pretty shocked when I got off the plane, after five years of German every day in school, you know, an hour a day, and my German-exchange family couldn’t speak English and I could not understand a word they said; but I got A’s, how did this happen? (Mary, lecture, StepOut 2011)

Here Mary in these personal and pedagogic narratives negatively positions academic learning. Her experience with “academic learning” appears to be rooted in decontextualized, behaviorist, grammar-translation approaches no longer typically used in the language learning environment most salient for these young, university educated Step-Out participants - American university classrooms. She says overtly that language cannot be learned in a classroom, but must instead be learned “out in the gym” like playing a piano or basketball.

I realized there that speaking and listening are a very different thing from reading and writing. And that it takes different skills and one is speaking and listening are really motor skills like you would learn basketball or piano. And how do you learn basketball or piano? Is it best learned in a classroom with PowerPoints and books open? No, it’s best learned out in the gym where you’re able to shoot the ball from the free-throw line a hundred times over every day and you get that muscle memory happening. (Mary, StepOut 2011)

Ironically, the theory of language acquisition which most strongly equates language learning with “muscle memory”, with performing routinized tasks is DeKeyser’s Skill Acquisition Theory (DeKeyser 2007), a theory almost directly in opposition to Thomson’s theoretical assumptions about how language learning proceeds. If language is truly learned in the same way as “playing basketball”, then isolated drilling and decontextualized practice would be of great value, the opposite of what she (and the GPA) wishes to claim. She further negatively positions academic or “cognitive” learning.

Classroom/cognitive: you’re going to have studying, and memorizing, and lists, and verb conjugations, and that kind of thing as your activities.
Sociocultural have more relational activities and communication activities. 
(...) Our default in the West is this classroom/cognitive approach. 
(Mary, lecture, StepOut 2010)

Mary links the ineffective cognitive approach with a Western ethnocentrism. She also frames skepticism about the need for a silent period in Western ethnocentrism.

M: So this approach really makes a very big emphasis on the importance of listening. Why do you think we as Westerners tend to emphasize the need to talk? Any thoughts? You’re sort of laughing a bit.
P1: Because we have something important to say.
M: We have something important to say, listen to me. I like to talk.
P2: We always assume that people who talk know more or are smarter.
M: Okay, when you talk, you know more. That’s maybe a cultural value that we hold that we do not even really know we hold.
(...)
M: Yes. So there are some cultural reasons why we in this room, at least some of us, may find it hard to go and focus on understanding and listening.
(Mary and StepOut participants, lecture, StepOut 2011)

No evidence is presented that the “need to talk” is a solely Western phenomenon, this is assumed. In an attempt to make participants aware of their own culture, and adopt the GPA’s mindset of learning another culture humbly, resistance to sociocultural approaches or a silent period on experiential or scientific grounds is positioned as being “Western”, which has a negative connotation for these future field workers, sensitive to criticisms of missions work as ethnocentric.

Thomson’s reformulation of ZPD as the “growth zone” is set in opposition by Mary to the “comfort zone”, a concept Love the World uses generally, to encourage people to get out of their comfort zones: “So you stay in your small little comfortable areas. Maybe we could say that you’re not really in your growth zone. You’re in your comfort zone and you stay in your little areas that are comfortable for you”. Later that
day, when I interviewed Jacob, a field worker in Slovakia, this is how he came to make sense of the “zone”.

J: I’m crazy immersed in language, so, we’ve been talking about, what’s it called, the zone?
I: The zone of proximal development?
J: The zone... it’s almost like this zone {pointing in front of him} is where I’m comfortable. And this zone {pointing further away} is right outside my comfort level. And then this zone {pointing even further away from his body} is where I’m not getting hardly much of everything. I spend most of my time in this {the third} zone, uncomfortable, I do not understand much. I spend so much time in this zone that I just turn off.
(Jacob, Slovakia, StepOut 2010)

In the context of this interview, Jacob understood the “growth zone” as being the one opposed to his comfort zone, his discomfort zone in fact, where he is overwhelmed by the language input, and just shuts down. Jacob in effect ends up understanding the ZPD in the GPA as something akin to Krashen’s i+2 or i+3.

5.4.2 Strong analogy position at StepOut

In motivating the GPA, Mary adopts a “strong analogy” position between child language acquisition and adult language acquisition. By doing so, she takes participants’ observed experience that all children are successful language learners, and argues that if these learners can learn like a child, they will be successful. Mary claims that if they are in the rich environment prescribed by SCT, that adults will learn the way they are “meant to”, like a child.

You do not even really try to learn a certain word but you’re exposed to it in different ways and all of a sudden you’ll use it and you’ll be like, “Oh! I’m good!” But that’s the way we’re meant to learn, that’s how kids learn. But you do have to have a very rich environment where you’re being exposed to those words a lot in order for that to happen. (Mary, lecture, StepOut 2011)
We spend an awful lot more time comprehending or listening and reading than we do speaking and writing in everyday life. Would you agree with me? So **not only babies start with listening, but we as adults** spend a lot more time listening and reading than we do speaking and writing. (Mary, lecture, StepOut 2011)

Participants’ anxieties about speaking errors are calmed by appealing to children’s language behavior as well.

And that’s the kind of philosophy that the growing participator approach holds – that you’re going to talk badly for a while and **you’re going to have to talk badly like little kids do**. And so the key concept is you’re going to have to talk even if it sounds bad. And that’s hard, especially for certain personalities. Maybe perfectionist personalities or people who just like to have it all together (Mary, lecture, StepOut 2011)

It is not clear what “badly” refers to in this instance, as the “badly” of a native speaking child is very different from the “badly” of an adult’s interlanguage in generative theory. In sociocultural theory, these two forms of “badly” are roughly analogous, resulting in a lack of apprenticeship to an expert.

### 5.4.3 Recognition that other approaches will be used

Even though Mary is obviously a proponent of the GPA, she does acknowledge that not everyone will want to use it. In a letter to organizational leaders describing the language component of StepOut, she writes:

> **We** (StepOut trainers) **make it clear that people are not required to use the GPA by [Love the World])** but that many workers are using it successfully to be effective in ministry, relationships, language and culture learning—this is a holistic approach. People have used it successfully alongside of a class. (Mary, letter to global HR staff, 2010)

In many countries where participants are sent, participation in traditional language classes is a prerequisite for attaining a visa. A session was held both years to help students get more out of this classroom learning. Even in these cases, participants were encouraged to engage a language helper in their out-of-class time as part of their language learning. In
the context of East Asia, learning characters is an important part of what it means to “learn the language” but Mary cautions learners about spending so much time on that that they miss the more “communicative” and “sociocultural” aspects of language learning.

But I encourage you to keep those in mind as you think about what your approach is and what you want to spend your time on. Keep this in mind too when you think about, “How do I want to divide my time? How much time am I going to spend memorizing characters? And while they’re important and I need to do them, is it in proportion to my needs?” (Mary, lecture, StepOut 2011)

5.4.4 The iceberg principle

The iceberg principle was the most salient aspect of the GPA for the StepOut participants. When interviewed over a year after the StepOut training, a vague reference to the “iceberg” was often the only thing they could articulate about the GPA. This was the aspect of GPA methodology given the fullest explanation by Mary.

It’s the idea that your brain is an iceberg. There’s much more underneath the surface than there is above the surface. And we tend to judge what we know by what’s above the surface. Anything above the waterline are things I can talk, I can say. They’re the words I use in speech with other people. And we tend to say, like someone said, we judge people, how much they know, by what they can say. So we as Westerners, I think we equate knowledge with what’s above the waterline, what I can say. (Mary, lecture, StepOut 2011)

Again, the enterprise of trying to focus on active vocabulary, the vocabulary which emerges in spontaneous production is positioned as being a “Western” phenomenon. Claim 11 of the GPA states that “subconsciously acquired language is responsible for initiating utterances and for fluency”. If a participant were to not buy the argument that learners have large amounts of subconsciously acquired language, which will “rise to the top” as a result of “strong encounters” this resistance can again be explained away as a product of Western ethnocentrism and biases. Mary gets support for the iceberg principle by appealing to participants’ felt difference between active and passive vocabularies in
their native language.

So the idea that our brains are an iceberg and that we have lots of words in our brain, even in English, that we cannot yet speak or use, but they’re a part of our knowledge base and we use them in lots of ways – to understand other people speaking, to read and write, but we do not necessarily have them in our vocabulary. So in another language the same is going to be true of you, so every word you learn does not have to be forced up to the top of the iceberg, okay? (Mary, lecture, StepOut 2011)

As it is uptaken by the participants, the “iceberg principle” is more than just a statement that one’s active vocabulary in a language is a subset of their passive vocabulary. Rather, the ‘iceberg principle’ is a claim about subconscious implicit learning. Pete, a Sprinter in Italy remembered the iceberg as “You might be able to say and speak a little but there’s so much underneath that you do not think you’re learning”. Mary supports this by saying that the iceberg principle should be used to resist the urge to speak “The iceberg principle is very helpful if you find yourself kind of going back to old habits of feeling a lot of pressure to speak something”. The concept of language attrition is described by Mary thus: “the iceberg is melting while you are back in the States”. Participants appeal to the “iceberg” to find solace; even if their language does not seem to be progressing, they are probably making progress “under the surface”, progress which is invisible to everyone, including themselves.

The iceberg principle raises the larger theoretical question of subconscious inductive learning. In Gass and Mackey’s Interaction Hypothesis (2007), input in and of itself is insufficient for the construction of a second language grammar. As described in Section 3.6.2, Schmidt's noticing hypothesis (1990, 1995, 2001) holds that input must be noticed to become intake, that subset of target language input which is useable to the learner. Thomson claims to take noticing into account by designing tasks where formS
Presumably, Thomson finds the concept of intake found in Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis and Gass' Interaction Hypothesis to be dealt with by appropriating Krashen's "comprehended input", or using his own phrasing, "input with a strong encounter".

Yet it seems, in Thomson's formulation of the iceberg principle, that all input has the potential to be added to the bottom of the iceberg, even if subconsciously. In this regard, Thomson differs from Schmidt, who only focuses on conscious attention, and again aligns with Krashen's Learning-Acquisition Hypothesis. At least this is how the StepOut participants understand the iceberg principle. Thomson tries to minimize that set of the input which does not become intake, through activities which depend on comprehension. It seems though that, controversially, all input might be taken in subconsciously by the learner, rendering the input/intake distinction unnecessary. This is consistent with the "strong analogy" position, that the language acquisition device is somehow still active for adults.

5.4.5 Lexical knowledge privileged over grammatical knowledge

Perhaps because "words" is a more accessible concept than morphemes, idiomatic expressions, or grammatical constructions, the training on the GPA at StepOut focuses on vocabulary almost to the exclusion of all else, and thus could easily be interpreted by the participants as a method of vocabulary learning, not a method of language learning. Ochs notes that there is a strong emphasis on words in psycho-cultural anthropology, where "single words continue to figure large, especially as cultural keys to fathoming the ethos of a community" (2012:147). Although Thomson developed the GPA to be used with morphosyntactically complex languages such as Blackfoot and Kazakh, words are
emphasized in the presentation of the GPA at StepOut, and also on the field language learners often describe memorizing uninflected, underived content morphemes when speaking of their language learning.

In the following extract from StepOut, Mary chose an activity from Phase 2 to be the first GPA activity which participants see demonstrated. Mary has a wordless picture book, and is describing to the language helper what is happening in the picture. The scenario was presented as if Mary were a beginning Arabic learner, and the helper were a native Arabic speaker. English in this conversation is thus meant to stand in for Arabic, making it accessible to all participants, to demonstrate the kind of pedagogical interaction that can arise from a wordless picture book.

1  M: (to helper) there’s a full moon then there is some grass
2  H: reeds
3  M: reeds
4   (to crowd) so that’s maybe a new word for me
5   and um I’ll write it down in my word log
6   (to helper) and there’s some big fat frogs sitting on
7   um round green...
8  H: lily pads
9  M: lily pads
10  and they are flying like this
11  H: through the air
12  M: yeah
13  through the air
14  they’re flying through the air
15  and umm they have
16  H: spots
17  M: spots yes
18  and umm they’re green and yellow
19  and there’s big eyes
20  and um they have
21  H: fingers
22  M: fingers!

(Mary and helper, demonstration, StepOut 2011)

Almost every time an example of the GPA being used to acquire a linguistic form was
given, the form was a stem inflected only for plural. In the demonstrations of Phase 1 activities on the second day, participants moved from table to table, where speakers of French, German, Chinese and Spanish taught words such as “man” “woman” “big” and “small” using toy objects. Even though these forms were inflected for categories such as gender, the participants often interpreted the utterances of the helper as monomorphemic. The only illustration that Mary gave of other kinds of linguistic forms being acquired through the GPA was in the following comment about ways to expand the wordless storybook depicting the frogs, immediately following the interaction shown above.

```
1 there are some things
 (sentences a learner could make using the frog picture)
2 on page 2
3 but you can
4 you can get into umm grammar things
5 like if I want to practice the future
6 I could say “the frogs will be”
7 and I can
8 you may think of “will be flying through the night”
   {the crowd’s laughter}
9 “the turtle will eat the fish”
 (Mary, demonstration, StepOut 2011)
```

In this example, Mary demonstrates how a present tense narrative could be moved into the future to practice future tense marking. One issue is that in English, the future marker “will” functions like a “vocabulary word”; this demonstration doesn’t prepare learners for dealing with future morphosyntactically, as in the future-tense suffixes of in Ukrainian, “-m-”, or Lithuanian, “-s-”, (added to the verbal stem before the person and number inflections) or light verbs like “će(-)” in Serbo-Croatian and “fog-” in Hungarian.

The resulting examples are also far removed from conversational exigence, being a “natural” and “native-like” discursive task which gives insight into the host culture. Using wordless storybooks as the impetus for narratives can result in privileging
infrequent vocabulary items over frequent ones. Lauren, using the GPA to learn German, learned content words like “chimney” and “melt” before much more frequent but less concrete forms like using reflexive pronouns or dative case endings. Although this order perhaps follows VanPatten’s (2003) Meaning before Non-Meaning Principle, Lauren will face far more examples of conversational exigence for a reflexive pronoun than she will for chimney.

In the storytelling scenario, Mary the learner, supposedly had a “strong encounter” with five new target language forms (reeds, lily pads, “through the air”, spots, fingers), relying on the helper for assisted performance to complete the storytelling task. The encounter is supposedly strong in that both form and meaning are attended to. Notice though that only one of the forms was not a vocabulary word. The “strong encounter” with the new vocabulary consisted of a single repetition, not part of any larger construction, or used in any novel way. To say that these words were “deeply processed” is a stretch. A single repetition is highly unlikely to result in recall. Amelia and Eric, beginning Hungarian learners, participated in a very well-executed demonstration lesson of a Phase 1 GPA activity, which involved comprehending sentences made about several small toy objects, which Amelia and Eric were asked to manipulate to show they had comprehended directives from a language helper, a native Hungarian speakers. In a one-hour lesson, Amelia and Eric heard and correctly responded to the word “tűzhely” (meaning "oven", although Amelia and Eric thought it meant "fireplace") over thirty times. After it was proven that they comprehended the form, Amelia and Eric produced the form verbally over a dozen times in a later part of the activity. Later that evening, at the end of the interview, Amelia attempted to recall that word.
A: what’s that word that I did not get the park today?
I: oh like fire? firehouse?
A: yeah!
I: a fireplace?
A: I do not know either of those words.
E: umm. [ust]?
A: was it a ‘t’?
I: It started with a ‘t’?
A: [tus.sʰɛ] [tu.sʰɛ]?
A: [tus.he]!
E: very good
A (to me): nagyon jo! nagyon jo! (very good, very good)
(Errica and Amelia, Hungary, StepOut 2011)

Even though there was so much repetition, and the form was deeply processed, neither Amelia nor I could represent internally the word <tűzhely>/[tʰyːz.hɛj]. Not only was the phonological form off, but we also misunderstood the semantic field. True, the word was probably in all of our passive vocabulary, “at the bottom of the iceberg” and we may have recognized it if it the language helper had spoken it. Nevertheless, we had numerous meaningful encounters with this form, “deeply processed” it, and were still unable to recall it. In defense of these demonstrations though, Michael, an International Staff in Italy, participated in that demonstration using the Portuguese language, in 2006. When he was interviewed at StepOut in 2011, five years later, Michael claimed:

I remember learning at StepOut at 2006 they would like do a motion and say a word, and those words are still in my mind, we did not have Italian speakers then so we were learning Portuguese and I can still remember those Portuguese words. those words are still there in my mind. So yeah what I’m saying is seeing the real object and saying the word and hearing the word it sticks in your brain. (Michael, Italy, StepOut 2011)

Numerous participants in the demonstrations (which were done with every participant, in languages other than Hungarian as well) complained most that they couldn’t see the word, and that recall would be enhanced with a visual representation: “I need to SEE a list and see it written to grasp it, but it was too much information over my head”. Sociocultural
theory would treat a visual representation of the word as a form of object mediation, a tool which could be used to scaffold performance of speaking the word. But the GPA not only privileges listening over speaking, but speaking and listening far above reading and writing. The illustrations used in the packaged GPA materials, such as the article “Becky is Learning Bonka” (Thomson 1994) seem to indicate that the method is designed with non-literary languages in mind, although Thomson used it to learn several literary languages himself, including Kazakh. In short although “tűzhely” was frequent in the input, and deeply processed enough to become intake, it wasn’t uptaken as part of the active vocabulary, something which the mediation of L1 self-talk or a written word might have assisted.

5.4.6 Demonstrations in the park

During the demonstrations of the GPA in a nearby park, I briefly observed several different groups participating in the demonstrations with different languages in StepOut 2010 and participated in mainly the Hungarian group in StepOut 2011. One thing that became clear is that not every group was following the GPA to the letter. Interviewed immediately after the demonstration in 2011, the field workers headed to Slovenia, who did the demonstrations in German, seemed impressed with the GPA method taught to them.

E: That was a lot more fun than I thought it was going to be
K: it was really helpful!
(Erica and Kristin, Slovenia, StepOut 2011)

Eight months later, in the field in Slovenia, I asked them if they thought a local language helper would be able to understand the GPA. Erica seemed very doubtful, and now framed what happened in the park as not being the GPA, but a different method entirely.
I do not know if we showed her the method we learned how she would react to it? You know even the German lady we had at StepOut that were trying to do this with she was like “yeah I do not want to do that” and she took over control of the meeting and did it her own way did it herself. Maybe she did not realize that the point wasn’t to teach German but that the point was to teach the method. So I think they realize that there is some skepticism there especially among national language tutors about that.
(Erica, Slovenia, field interview, 2012)

Even though the demonstration was supposed to be the main occasion on which the participants were taught how to use the GPA, even if only a small slice of it, at least these two participants had something much different demonstrated to them. In the Serbo-Croatian group at StepOut 2010, I also observed that the groups weren’t really following the GPA, instead relying on English-mediated metalinguistic knowledge to accomplish the task. As no native Serbo-Croatian speaker could be located, Mark, a then intermediate speaker of the language was asked to demonstrate the method to the beginner learners, Brian and Anelisa.

1. *dai jedna polovku* {Brian and Anelisa hand him a pencil}
2. *jedna polovka* {participants point to a pencil}
3. *dvie polovki* {participants group two pencils together and point}
4. wait I cannot say this because **it’s going to end up in accusative case**
5. it gets really confusing
6. even **after a year I cannot figure out what case I needed**
7. after 6 it changes
8. 1 is one way
9. 2-3 is one way
10. 5 is one way
11. more than 6 is another way
12. I still get this wrong all the time
13. *dai mi dvie polovki* {participants hand him two pencils}
   (Mark, Bosnia, GPA demonstration, StepOut 2010)

Mark’s command in line 1, “*dai jedna polovku*” (give (me) one pencil) should in fact be “*dai jednu olovku*”. Not only did Mark have the wrong internal representation of the
word for pencil, he recognizes that in Croatian, the -a ending, which marks feminine nominative, must change to an -u ending in this command, to mark feminine accusative. He correctly changes the noun ending from “polovka” to “polovku”, but does not change the determiner “jedna” to “jednu”. These inaccuracies are perhaps not that important, since he is teaching the method in this demonstration, not the language itself. However, he does desire to teach the language correctly, and he runs into a problem with inflectional morphology. This morphology, which would appear in Eastern European languages even in the most basic of tasks, significantly complicates the processing for the learners, as they have to now induce fusional case suffixes, a completely new concept. In my field notes, as I walked around from group to group, I noticed that in many of the Phase 2-5 demonstrations, the helpers and learners were using metalinguistic turns in English: “Where do you use that word/case?”, “We would use...”, “How do you say that?”, “Do you remember the word for...?” to bootstrap target language input. This use of English is not part of the GPA (although well theorized in SCT, see Lantolf 2006) but would become part of what the participants’ working model of what the GPA is.

Learning numbers through such simple physical activities may work well in a language like English, but Slavic numbers induce very complex morphology, and each number word can appear in dozens of phonological forms, depending on context. Unless the GPA was specifically adapted to take this into account, with the kind of input control advocated by VanPatten in his Processing Instruction, introducing only one contrast at a time, these learners will soon be over their heads in a sea of inflections. This is a potential weakness of a one-methodology-fits-all-languages approach like the GPA. Mark wants to rely on metalinguistic explanations to shortcut the participants understanding of what is
going on with these endings, and is dismayed, when using English, to discover that the
participants had linked the linguistic form “cipola” with the idea of “shoe”, as a toy
plastic shoe was used in the demonstration. The teacher however had been linking
“cipola” with the idea of “feet”, a case where the physical object proved
counterproductive in scaffolding the acquisition of the linguistic object.

1 M: what should we do now?
2 B: you could say shoes like yellow shoes, blue shoes, orange shoes white
shoes
3 M: well it’s hard cause it’s going to be a lot easier when you guys can talk,
4 because you can ask “what color is this?”
5 I could use the colors in other things
6 the blue bird eats the….
7 A: we can do actions and verbs again
8 M: I could do “give me something this color”
9 B: I think “shoes” would be a good one because shoes is a new word
10 M: See- this is one of the challenges of this because
11 cipola is feet not shoes
   (Brian had interpreted it as “shoes”, Mark meant it as “feet”)
12 A: You could say who has…
13 B: How about you tell us an action, and we have to draw the action
   (Mark, Brian and Anelisa, Bosnia, GPA demonstration, StepOut 2010)

As a result of the condensed time frame, where two weeks of Greg Thomson’s official
GPA training were condensed into three days, the participants in my study are less
influenced in their learnerhood by the GPA than their many counterparts working with
other organizations who have gone through the official GPA training, or work in.organizations who have adopted the full version of the GPA as official language learning
policy. My participants’ mental representation of the GPA then, is likely to have holes,
and as seen in the preceding extract, and they may associate certain behaviors with the
GPA which Greg Thomson would himself refute.
5.5 SUMMARY AND CONSEQUENCES FOR LEARNERHOOD

In summary, the pre-field StepOut training program is a significant step in the formation of these field workers’ second language learnerhood. Not only do they receive reading materials, lectures, and demonstrations which teach the GPA, but they are exposed to other aspects of second language learnerhood, such as building motivation and how to use classroom settings more effectively. Participants are also asked to formally present a language learning plan, identifying how they plan to go about learning the language during the first two years of their field time, the period of “doing language”. This language learning plan, and the interviews that the participants conducted with me were often the first time they reflexively thought about language learning from an abstract and strategic perspective. In addition to these formal components, the informal networks built with more experienced field workers and field workers serving in other countries, with different language learning experiences, creates an important new social network within Love the World which is often formational in their ideologies of not only mission strategy, but also acculturation and language learning.

The most important point about the GPA at StepOut is that the content of the method itself seems less important than how it is presented at StepOut in shaping the learnerhoods of Love the World field workers. This is due to the fact the language component of StepOut is constantly being squeezed into shorter time periods, so a full and coherent picture of the GPA cannot be presented, and due to the timing of the training, which for many participants comes either too early (long before they arrive on field), or too late (after two years of habit-forming as Sprinters) to “stick”. The most “sticky” part of the StepOut training is the demonstrations in the park, and certain
keywords, like the “iceberg” and “language helper” which continue to surface as they enter the field.

On the whole, the participants are positioned by the GPA training at StepOut as being used to or preferring academic, “cognitive” learning, in which representations of metalinguistic knowledge are used as a tool to assist in making hypotheses about the target language. Grammatical accuracy, drilling, translation, and memorizing vocabulary are also associated with this academic, cognitive learning style. This approach to language is evaluated as “not based on cutting edge research” and arising from a “Western” ethnocentric bias. In contrast, the GPA is positioned as “natural”, being closer to the way children learn, “relational” due to its sociocultural roots (a definite plus over a population who want to fit in in the host culture), “scientific”, and “effective” downplaying language aptitude as a determining factor in ultimate attainment. On the whole, participants emerged from the StepOut training very excited about the GPA and sold on it, at least for a time. In following chapters, I will address what happens to these learners’ excitement about and commitment to the GPA as they move through their trajectories in the field
6. THEMES THAT EMERGE ABOUT SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERHOOD

So far, I have introduced second language learnerhood, my participant population, new medium-term International Staff, and shown how their organization has sought to teach them to use a sociocultural methodology called the Growing Participator Approach for their language learning. In this chapter, I will present the main consistent themes in the development of second language learnerhood derived from content analysis. These themes all conspire to slow learners' rate of language acquisition by reducing the amount of input they are exposed to. These themes also lead learners to select language learning methods where the input they are exposed to may be less noticed (Schmidt 2012), less negotiated (Gass & Mackey 2007) and less comprehensible.

I will show how my participants’ negative but robust experiences with language learning in high school and college shape their views on learnerhood. This includes resisting sociocultural approaches. I will demonstrate how they have internalized their organization’s position about learning style, but feel conflicted about the organization’s approach to assessment and accountability. In their learnerhood, they view attainment as being a function of time, which is in line with the organization’s own view, yet they hold a contradictory view that language attainment is also a function of innate aptitude.

6.1 EMBEDDED WORLDS AND PROCESSES OF ENTEXTUALIZATION IN INTERVIEWS

Narratives are emergent, situated, and complex and in order to understand the narrative data which will be used as evidence in the following chapters it is worth illustrating an example of how my interviewees created different narrative worlds within
which they used to carry out the problem-solving aspects of these interviews. An example can be found in an extract produced by one of my participants, Mark, typical of the interview data I collected. In response to question 9 above, about what was at stake in learning the language well, Mark produces a very complex narrative extract. Three different “worlds” of interaction are present in this relatively short narrative (Bauman 1986), which includes both re-imagined pasts and imagined futures. Participants seem to slide into a boundary world, a sort of narrative airlock between the interview event and the narrated event, as marked by pronoun usage and epistemic stances.

In the storytelling or “interview” world, the narrator touches base with me often to mark their epistemic or affective stance toward the world about to be narrated, and to solicit my support or evaluation. The narrated world frequently involves ventriloquiations of people in the host community, which may represent aggregate models of real people encountered in past visits, or wholly imagined voices. In the following transcript, language in the interview world, Bauman’s “storytelling world” is presented in small capitals. Bold language indicates a liminal between-world zone, where a shift in interpretive frame is being keyed to the audience - in this case the transition from the world of the interview to the world of the narrated episode, rendered in italics.
1 LANGUAGE
2 HELPS SOMEBODY
3 to just say
4 you know well
5 you’re nice and all but
6 this message of
7 Jesus Christ
8 that’s for Americans
9 you speak English”
10 and so
11 “We’re Bosnians, you know,
12 we’re different
13 we don’t speak the same language
14 and we have our own”
15 they would say
16 “we have a different mentality”
17 they would say
18 IN ENGLISH
19 I DON’T KNOW WHAT THE WORD IS IN BOSNIAN
20 they’d always say
21 YOU KNOW
22 ”We’re Muslim
23 And we’re Catholic”
24 or whatever
25 because
26 “we’re a different mentality
27 than you are”
(Jack, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

Figure 6.1: Embedded worlds in Jack’s description of Bosnians

In the boundary, where a new frame is being keyed, the narrator begins to slide away from addressing me, the interviewer, and the turns seemed aimed both at me and at the entire narrated world about to be performed. A signature feature of this frame boundary seems to be the phrase “they would say”, serving as a marker that the “other” is about to be enacted (Shuck 2004). The “other”, a prototypical Bosnian, speaks in the 1st person plural about having a different mentality, which is caused by or at least closely related to speaking another language, relating to an Andersonian (1991) nation building project that a language = a religion = a nation. As a non-Serbo-Croatian speaker, a kind of Greek
chorus of Bosnians rejects Jack as a voice in Bosnian culture, and rejects his religious beliefs as well.

The phrase “they would always say” (line 20) involves three entextualizations. Entextualization (Bauman & Briggs 1990, Silverstein & Urban 1996, French 2009) is a process which takes actual, situated, contextually-dependent utterances, and turns them through a series of permutations into a “factual account” that appear to be quite context independent. Sometimes these factual accounts are written in an entirely different language, as is the case of translations. The process of decontextualization, erasure and translation are obscured to those who only encounter the entextualized artifact.

The pronoun “they” in the boundary world (lines 15, 17, 20) obscures who, if anyone at all, might have uttered the words recounted as direct speech in the narrated world. If real people had uttered parts of that, the words are now attributed collectively to all Bosnians. “Would” obscures the actual timing of these utterances - is it a habitual past or a hypothetical future? Did such words occur repeatedly, at one memorable occasion, or in fact never? “Say” also obscures the fact that the direct speech may be translated, synthesized or never have been uttered. Mark’s “They would say” allows him to ventriloquate the imaginary host community to perform exclusion - a feared consequence of failure to learn the language.

Such entextualization is always present in my narrative data, as my participants bundle and aggregate past experiences, erasing some detail, highlighting other detail, and extracting from this aggregation an entextualized claim which is judged to be most relevant to the interactional situation (in this case, an interview with an academic interested in language learning). For most of my narrative data, I cannot independently
judge what kinds of entextualization may be occurring, and whether real-life experiences would have been entextualized in the same way for a different researcher, or if asked to recount those same experiences on a different day. This weakness must be kept in mind as narrative evidence for my claims is presented. Despite this weakness, these accounts are nonetheless helpful for interviewees to deal with the intertextual gaps (Bauman & Briggs 1992) that arise when envisioning or re-envisioning past and future learnerhoods.

6.2 Influence from Personal Past Experience with Academic Learning

In interviews with my participants, I first asked them about their history with language learning, and what they learned from that history. These participants almost all began their language learning experiences with formal classes in high school and college. Based on the interviews, it seems like these were four-skills classes, which deemphasized speaking, and heavily emphasized metalinguistic knowledge, and grammatical accuracy over conversational fluency. Some portrayed these experiences as being positive and effective, such as Teresa in Bosnia, who happily stated, “I had two years of Spanish in high school, I loved it” (Teresa, Bosnia), or Lauren in Germany who when asked if she could conjugate verbs replied, “Oh yeah I learned all and all it stuck with me for some reason from high school... yes I can conjugate both verbs (haben and sein, which are used for forming the past tense in German) most verbs actually”. Kristin in Slovenia, appreciated that when she took “Spanish in college that teacher only spoke to us in Spanish… basically he was from Colombia… I think he was a lot tougher on us, in a good way to learn it”. Evaluations that were in any way positive were incredibly rare. Most of the learners spoke as if from a pre-arranged script, describing their prior language learning experiences as:
Not encouraging speaking:

All through high school and the courses I took in college my teachers never had us speak it (Spanish). (Kristina, Italy, StepOut 2011)

I have kind of a sordid past. Yeah... a sordid* past of language because in high school I did French but I could never speak it (Donna, Italy, field interview 2012) (*"Sordid” seems to mean transgressive and guilty. Donna did report however, being able to understand some French still in a later portion of the interview)

I studied two years of Spanish but I did not learn well. They just had a linguistic textbook and at that point in life that did not stay with me. I did not pick it up because I did not have a chance to be immersed or to use it anyway outside of class (Eric, Hungary, StepOut 2011)

As being very structured (textbook-driven, teacher-driven learning):

I really had two experiences with language learning I learned French in high school which was a pretty structured classroom environment (Anelisa, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

When I was in high school we took Spanish for two years to fulfill my requirements to graduate. I did not learn very much. So that was highly structured class setting with proper uh language I guess from Spain so you know I wasn’t able to really use any of it (Jack, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

As resulting in no retention:

I studied German in high school but I do not remember any. (Kristin, Slovenia, StepOut 2011)

I took Spanish in high school but I did not learn anything. (Jacob, Slovakia, StepOut 2010)

But I spent I spent about four ye-- I think all four years in high school in a French class. And um I remember feeling like umm when I got to France like… I really did not know like …like my four years really did not count for that much (Anelisa, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

I took Spanish, but it was unsuccessful. I just remember one mnemonic device “la piscina” – piss in the piscine (Mark, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)
I studied French in high school and college, and tested into intermediate level, but it was above my head. I was surprised I tested into that, and it led to being overwhelmed (Kathleen, Italy, StepOut 2010)

This evaluation of academic learning, the style done in classrooms, as being ineffective and condemning is a kind of trope, and one which Mary exploited at StepOut to motivate learners to use the GPA, as shown in Section 5.4.1. Wilson, who advocates for sociocultural approaches among missionary language learners, recruits this trope as well, showing that academic language classes disappoint and humiliate students.

I have frequently come into contact with individuals who studied French for two years in high school or took Spanish in college or who, like me, studied a language out of intense interest for perhaps years without becoming a speaker of the language. These learners who share my disappointing experience often may know about the language but cannot communicate in the language. Sometimes, they have concluded that they just are not among the gifted few who have the ability to grasp a second language and have resigned themselves to some lesser goal than becoming a member of a new speech community (Wilson 2000).

In testimonies on sociocultural methods at the ICLL conference, the GPA was depicted as delivering learners from these sorts of learning experiences. Dwight Gradin, the founder of MTI and instructor of the PILAT method of language learning says based on his four decades of experience “missionaries think that a language school will give them everything they need”, and he noticed a strong academic bias among the participants in his programs. One participant who had just been taught the sociocultural PILAT method at MTI reported that being exposed to sociocultural methods was promising and liberating.

I took French in high school and college for almost 6 years but was never able to become fluent in the language. Because of my experience in studying French in school, I have always seen language learning as an academic exercise. PILAT is showing me that in order to really become
proficient, it needs to be much more hands-on than I ever realized.  
(Stephen, journal after PILAT training, 2011)

6.2.1 Continued resorting to academic methods

Mary was perhaps hoping for StepOut participants to experience a similar 
catharsis, transforming their trust in and reliance on academic methods of learning. 
A striking result of my study is that almost all my participants continued to rely 
heavily on academic and classroom-based methods of learning, despite having 
almost universally depicted them as being ineffective. Kristin, trying to learn 
Slovene, continued to find her academic methods ineffective when arriving in the 
field. She felt that although she had learned some Slovene during her Sprint in 
Slovenia, “all the Slovenian I had I lost. I can recognize words and I know it’s a 
word that I had once learned, but those words are not there anymore, and I have 
no idea what they mean. All the methods that [my tutors and I] used like with 
flashcards with the conjugations were very grammar focused”. Even after tutoring, 
she said that “by the time I would get through it, I knew I was only remembering 
like the skin layer off the top. I could sit with my tutor and we could talk for 
maybe five or ten minutes about what did yesterday but nothing beyond that 
really”.

Despite her past academic experiences being ineffective and frustrating for 
er, they were the first thing she turned to after StepOut to learn the language 
before arriving in the field. Even after arriving, she told me that she thought “the 
ideal tutor was one like I had last time, a Slovene girl that she had just met 
through student activities but she was studying Slovene and linguistics or 
linguistic history or something as her major so she knew about the language”.

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Kristin continued to privilege academic metalinguistic knowledge, saying that academic methods “help me because it wasn’t just a Slovene saying ‘I do not know why we say it this way’ but she could help me with the formula of the language. Explaining specific rules and grammar and that it made sense to me”. This directly contradicts the model of language learning presented via the GPA at StepOut.

Her teammate Erica seemed to agree with this reliance on academic knowledge, and the conclusions she drew from her and Kristin’s GPA demonstration lesson at StepOut, led by a native German speaker named Sophia, were exactly opposite to those intended, which privileged sociocultural communication over grammatical rules and metalinguistic awareness.

I think today- meeting with Sophia- that was a good example of someone who would be helpful. Like she knew a lot. She was a teacher. She knew how to help us make connections ‘That happens here and here and here because they’re related in this way.’ So having those linguistic categories is very helpful. She knew a lot, even if she did not tell us all of them, she could help us make connections in the data and if we were like ‘okay that’s enough’ she would say ‘no say it three more times!’ (Kristin, Slovenia, StepOut 2011)

In this one extract we see that the GPA demonstration violated the principle of a silent period and utilized overt metalinguistic knowledge. Unlike the GPA, which says that learners do not need a teacher, just any native speaker, Kristin and Erica privileged pedagogical skill, linking it to metalinguistic awareness and explicit instruction.

More evidence for leaning on academic learning methods comes from Teresa’s preference for grammar drill activities and Tara’s decision to structure her tutoring times around verb conjugations.
Whenever [my tutor assigned] an essay I would get really irritated like “man I hate that”. I would much rather prefer when she gives me like homework when it’s like write 50 sentences using all of these different verbs that I give you in this way to help you really make it concrete understanding of this umm point. (Teresa, Bosnia, field interview 2012)

I like practicing verb paradigms- I’ll be like ‘I’m brushing my teeth. I’m washing my face. I’m taking a shower’ and like as I was doing those things I was saying it like “perim zubi... zube... ja sam prana zube... ja cu prati zube...” You know like I was saying it like past, present, future, like over and over or like you’re brushing your teeth “pereš zube... pere zube... peremo zube!” It must’ve sounded really stupid but but it like really you know “tućiram se” “tućiraš se” (Teresa, Bosnia, field interview 2012)

So well what I want to really know is how to communicate in basic conjugation of verbs. So I printed a list of 100 verbs. That are the most widely used verbs. I just Googled that. So [my tutor] and I just started working with that list on how to conjugate those verbs. And then we got a textbook (Tara, Hungary, field interview 2012)

When, for visa reasons, the Sweden field workers were unable to participate in the language classes offered by the Swedish government, they seemed particularly at a loss to figure out how to make any progress at all in the language. Joshua, in Hungary, said that his experience learning Greek in seminary made him aware of the metalinguistic complexity of Hungarian. After learning the language through interactions with locals, his anxiousness that he might be learning to speak with inaccurate grammar led him to: “end up taking some classes, and I realized there was a lot of things that I did wrong and I still do things wrong but one thing I like made a lot of mistakes with possession”. Even Lauren, the only one of the participants in my study who was fully committed to using the GPA expressed anxiety about not learning grammar well.

You know the only thing I’ve really tried is taking German in high school and I mean the thing that I’m worried about is that my grammar is gonna turn out really bad and also I’m at the mercy of them teaching me correctly like I’m totally dependent that they are teaching me the right words and pronouncing and getting it correctly and teaching me the right grammar. (Lauren, Germany, field interview 2012)
Even though academic learning is positioned by both agents of socialization such as Mary and Dwight Gradin, and by the vast majority of my participants, as ineffective, perhaps because of the sheer amount of time they have spent in language classrooms in the past, academic models seem to be the default of these participants’ learnerhood. This presents a serious obstacle to organizations who believe sociocultural methods to be more effective and wish to adopt them. As participants are not used to learning a language purely through interaction, the GPA approach may be met with skepticism.

6.2.2 Pre-packaged CALL applications

If interaction is at all important for language acquisition, as proponents of both sociocultural and cognitive approaches would hold, then it is perhaps even more dismaying that these participants turn so readily to pre-packaged computer software, including Pimsleur and Byki, but most notably Rosetta Stone (1992). With the Swedish government’s academic classes closed to the field workers in Sweden for visa reasons, they turned to Rosetta Stone for their language learning. According to Julie “Everyone is trying to do Rosetta Stone” and indeed, Adam and Paul, her coworkers in Sweden, asked me a series of questions the whole time I was in Sweden about the effectiveness of Rosetta Stone. Upon arriving in Sweden after StepOut Julie did give the GPA book to a Swedish tutor she found, but that tutor did not do anything with it. When I asked Julie to tell me what she knew about the GPA and grammar instruction, she did not remember anything about how the GPA uses recordings to inductively learn grammar. Julie felt that GPA was useless for grammar, only good for vocabulary. She already had enough vocabulary to communicate, admitting “I don’t know- maybe I just do not understand the method or something, but I do not feel like it is very helpful”. Julie’s main frustration was
that she cannot say things in a way which is “natural for Swedes to say them in”, or learn phrases the way that Swedes would phrase things, learning chunks. Ironically, these skills are exactly what the GPA offers, and what Rosetta Stone does not.

Michael in Italy, turned to Rosetta Stone as his default way of learning Italian, and said that after StepOut he “decided to get really serious about language learning and hit Rosetta Stone hard”. Several other participants first turned to Rosetta Stone when trying to “do language” as well. The most common advantages cited for Rosetta Stone was that you could do it anywhere, and that it was structured, it gave you a way of feeling like you were making progress. These are indeed weaknesses of the GPA, and I will discuss attitudes towards learner autonomy and towards assessment of progress later in this chapter.

Since Rosetta Stone does not use the classroom or a textbook, and does involve individual time with an “expert”, participants may feel like turning to Rosetta Stone would be roughly equivalent to using the GPA or a learner-driven sociocultural methodology. Another apparent point of similarity is that Rosetta Stone relies on inductive, implicit grammar instruction, as there is no metalinguistic instruction, or use of the L1. It is not however self-driven, but rather program-driven, in that the learners have no say over what input they get or in what order they are exposed to it. Rosetta Stone also differs most significantly from PILAT or the GPA in that it is not tailored to an individual language. Learners link chunks of language to pictures or visual representations, but these pictures are relatively uniform across languages. A language like Croatian, which has a complex case system, is treated the same way as Italian, which has no case system in terms of the presentation of input. Structures which are harder to acquire are not treated
differently, and there is no attempt as in Processing Instruction to teach one contrast at a
time. Comprehension is not essential to move on in the program, as multiple choice
guessing will allow learners to proceed.

The most glaring weakness of these programs is that there is no output, nor
interaction. The only time a learner must produce something is in a pronunciation
component, wherein a learner must speak into a microphone, and the program won’t
proceed unless the learner’s pronunciation is judged to be satisfactory. No feedback is
given to the learners however in terms of which aspects of their pronunciation are
deemed to be deficient, and my hunch in observing users is that the program relies on
pitch and suprasegmental information, rather than on segmental accuracy. The lack of
relevant cultural situation, learner autonomy, true exigence, opportunity for feedback, or
output of any kind are significant weakness of these programs, as compared with both
academic and sociocultural pedagogical strategies.

6.2.3 Metalinguistic knowledge

In advocating a strong analogy between child and adult language acquisition,
and the implicit subconscious acquisition of a grammar, the GPA argues against using
explicit metalinguistic knowledge as a tool for acquisition. The GPA materials hold that
any language is equally learnable using the method, including languages which are
difficult for English L1 learners, like Carrier, Blackfoot and Kazakh. These languages
present English speakers with novel phonological, morphological and syntactic patterns,
yet Thomson learned these languages while developing the method. Learning is imagined
to consist of being socialized into the appropriate ways of using phrases as social tools,
and not of contrastive analysis or overt learning of complex grammatical patterns. In the
GPA’s incarnation of sociocultural theory, then, there is little room for overt, externally represented metalinguistic awareness. However, metalinguistic awareness is not necessarily at odds with Vygotskian sociocultural theory. Carr notes that “metalinguistic awareness has more to do with situated practice- and more specifically, the skills one develops in one’s history as a speaker in situ- than with the nature of the linguistics signs in question” (2010: 194). Any metalinguistic awareness cannot be purely abstract, but is always situated within a personal history of learning, of exposure to signs.

Carr also warns ethnographers to not automatically conflate a speaker’s knowledge about their language (metalinguistic awareness) and what they can describe in the abstract during an ethnographic interview (metalinguistic description). Carr’s distinction here presumes a native speaker, where awareness of how a mother tongue works may not translate into the appropriate terminology needed to describe the language to a non-speaker. For an adult second language learner, especially one who has used academic methods to learn the language, metalinguistic awareness and metalinguistic description are probably closer. Most of what a learner has figured out about an L2 is probably accessible via the L1 to communicate to another native speaker of the L1. In my data, I am not asking native speakers of languages to explain in that language how their language works (although my participants are often in that situation). Rather, my participants’ metalinguistic descriptions are given in English to another native speaker of English, and a more novice learner of the host language. Because of this crucial difference, I feel more confident using speakers’ metalinguistic descriptions to gauge their metalinguistic awareness.
Yet Love the World’s International Staff, probably as a result of their time in academic language classrooms, are interested in overt uses of metalinguistic knowledge in pedagogy, and are clearly adept at describing their target languages metalinguistically, in a way that someone who only used the LAMP or GPA wouldn’t be able to. Figure 6.2 illustrates some of the many artifacts used to represent metalinguistic knowledge.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hungarian declensions and conjugations on Tara’s kitchen corkboard</th>
<th>Chart of feminine 4th declensions in Serbo-Croat used by Theresa</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homemade Slovene flash cards used by Erica</td>
<td>Laminated chart of Slovak conjugations carried by Jacob</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**FIGURE 6.2:** Artifacts used to externally represent metalinguistic knowledge

In a survey conducted by Mary of 227 Love the World International Staff in 2009, however, learners reported that the perceived difficulty of their target language, as compared to other possible target languages, was a primary determinant of their language
attainment. As depicted in Table 6.1 field workers were divided into groups based on what percent of the time they reported using the target language in their ministry. The “low group” used the language less than 10% of the time and the “medium group” between 10-50%. Respondents were also divided according to region, and asked to list the factors which most hindered their attainment, although host nationals’ English ability was the primary hindrance, the perceived difficulty of the target language was used as an explanation for low attainment.

**Table 6.1**: Results from survey of low- and medium-achieving International Staff on factors most hindering their ultimate attainment (the top three responses are shown).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Eastern Europe</th>
<th>Western Europe</th>
<th>East Asia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Low Group (n = 26)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Low Group (n = 31)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Low Group (n = 36)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindrance factors</td>
<td>Hindrance factors</td>
<td>Hindrance factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Host nationals wanting to use English</td>
<td>21 Host nationals wanting to use English</td>
<td>26 Difficulty of target language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Difficulty of target language</td>
<td>19 Difficulty of target language</td>
<td>13 Attitude problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Attitude problems</td>
<td>13 Attitude problems</td>
<td>11 Host nationals wanting to use English</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Medium Group (n = 17)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Medium Group (n = 31)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Medium Group (n = 42)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hindrance factors</td>
<td>Hindrance factors</td>
<td>Hindrance factors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Host nationals wanting to use English</td>
<td>17 Host nationals wanting to use English</td>
<td>28 Difficulty of target language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Difficulty of target language</td>
<td>11 Difficulty of target language</td>
<td>20 Attitude problems</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Attitude problems</td>
<td>9 Attitude problems</td>
<td>13 Host nationals wanting to use English</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although in Europe code choice is the largest obstacle to attainment, language difficulty, which is as downplayed in the GPA as aptitude is, is seen as a major barrier. Hungarian learners, for example, often appealed to the complex rules of word formation to explain the difficulty of their target language.

there’s Hungarian rules and when you buy this one book there’s these rules
and the Hungarians’ rules spell it out
but there’s always exceptions to every rule
(Tara, Hungary, field interview 2012)
The ability of a tutor to describe the rules of the target language in a prescriptive way is often seen as the most desirable characteristic, as Tara and her husband Jim explain to me about their preferred tutor.

J: She says something (about Hungarian) and I’m like well that’s kind of weird and she goes (in English) “well English does that” I go like “it does?” and she’ll give me like three examples and I’ll be like “oh yeah” she knows English cold and she knows Hungarian properly like she knows the right way to do things that drives her nuts when she hears Hungarians not speaking properly. (Tara and Jim, Hungary, field interview 2012)

T: like she’ll roll her eyes and just be like you know like all that really bugs her.

Terry is a beginning Hungarian learner working with a different organization. In commenting to me how bad Love the World field workers are at learning the language, he shows a high degree of metalinguistic awareness, using terms like vowel harmony, roots, and formulas.

Yes, Hungarian has different things with their own forms, but I do not think it’s really that hard. Vowel harmony and stuff — it’s so formulaic that it makes sense, especially in speaking, although listening for root AND ending is a little harder. (Terry, field worker in Hungary for different organization, interview 2012)

Hungarian is indeed ranked by the Foreign Service Institute as one of the most difficult languages for English L1 learners to achieve proficiency in. Yet Slovene, Serbo-Croatian, and Slovak are given the same level of difficulty, presenting English L1 learners with a bewildering array of new morphological categories and morphosyntactic and morphophonological irregularities. These morphosyntactic phenomena are argued by Ochs to be a key component of learners’ experience of reality, illuminating the
“subjective and intersubjective worlds” and encoding “all-important temporal, epistemic, affective, model, actional, stative, attributive and locative meanings (2012:148)”, and thus essential to experiencing a second language self.

This morphosyntactic complexity is highly salient to learners, and the weaknesses of the GPA for acquiring this complexity are apparent to them. In the following transcript, Jim and Tara describe how their early attempts to use the GPA proved ineffective in acquiring a complex language like Hungarian.

1 T: the other problem we ran into
2 when we were trying to do it all together
3 is like
4 Hungarian’s so heavily inflected that you cannot just point out a picture of a person walking...
5 like the word is different depending on so many different factors that the picture does not convey.
6 I: right how do you even know which part of the picture means “walk”
7 or “him” or “he” or...
8 J: you mean “he’s walking”
9 or “I am walking”
10 or “they are”
11 there is a whole different...
12 in all of these different endings
13 and the endings change based on the vowels.
14 I: even tudom tudok,
15 they both mean “I know” but like...
16 T: {excitedly} they’re definite and indefinite conjugation!
17 so it’s it’s dependent on whether you have a direct object
18 if you have a direct object it’s tudok, I mean it’s tudom,
19 if you do not it’s tudok
20 how would you get that from a picture!?
   (referring to the GPA Phase 1 activities which they tried)
21 and as an adult?
22 J: nem tudom! (‘I do not know’)
23 T: {laughs} anyway so I just did not use any of that
   (that = activities from the GPA book)
   (Tara and Jim, Hungary, Field interview, 2012)

At StepOut, the GPA demonstrations only presented the acquisition of uninflected, concrete lexical items. Learners never got a sense of how abstract concepts, functional
morphology (lines 8-13) or grammatical constructions (lines 16-17) would be acquired. These learners, who had access to metalinguistic knowledge, realized the limits of Phase 1 activities which seek to link linguistic forms to objects. Tara’s skepticism (line 21) that an adult could, using only sociocultural methods, decipher the complexities of the abstract Hungarian verb “tud-” (lines 14-20) led her to abandon the method (line 23), although she had planned on using it at StepOut.

6.2.4 Field workers’ ability to metalinguistically describe their host languages

Many Love the World field workers show a similar desire and ability to use metalinguistic descriptors as a way to scaffold knowledge about their host language. This behavior does fit within sociocultural theory, as a form of mediation and assisted performance, as learners are on their way to internalizing cognition. However sociocultural methodologies like the GPA downplay these sorts of metalinguistic tools and descriptive moments as being distracting. The fact that the following metalinguistic descriptions occurred show that these learners are more influenced by the academic ways of talking about language learned through textbooks and classroom methods, than they are by the GPA’s model of learnerhood.

The way I finally learned Russian was to learn the verb, to learn the preposition, to learn the root of the word and then you can connect it to some things. So we began to talk about nominative, accusative, genitive - even in Italian because then to me I really began to understand, even in Italian. (Donna, Italy, field interview 2012)

Wait... I can’t say this because it’s going to end up in accusative case it gets really confusing. Even after a year I can’t figure out what case I needed. After 6 it changes, 1 is one way, 2-3 is one way, 5 is one way, more than 6 is another way. I still get this wrong all the time (Mark, Bosnia, GPA demonstrations, StepOut 2010)
We’ve learned from our language helpers we do not have to worry about ‘he’ or ‘she’ because they just have one and we do not have to worry about what’s feminine or masculine- there’s no plural at the end just like this. (Tara, Hungary, StepOut 2010)

I did buy a book. And then that was helpful.. was the first... and I was introduced to the imperative tense and Hungarians use that differently and a lot more often than we do in English. (Joshua, Hungary, field interview 2012)

The activities I enjoyed most were when they teach something and then use it- when they talk and be corrected by the teacher, using a grammar structure. “imperfetto” for example- learn it, then use it in a sentence. (Michael, Italy, StepOut 2011)

I: what kinds of things are you guys able to do in Italian right now?  
M: haltingly tell a story from past, using past composite, imperfect  
there’s the past where you use the sono, or sei, and the imperfetto  
(Michael, Italy, StepOut 2011).

The ability to metalinguistically describe the target language appears to have been taught from metalinguistic descriptions in their earlier academic careers, and the metalinguistic descriptions used by the textbooks and tutors that these learners turned to in the absence of confidence in the GPA. Not all learners though wanted to learn this way. Anelisa in the following extract exemplifies the group of learners who have metalinguistic awareness, but doubt the sufficiency or usefulness of that knowledge, based in past narratives of her language learning in high school and college. As she explains her language goals, her narrative slows way down, with each new line indicating speaking after a pause.

1 [My goal is to] get you know  
2 of course do better in grammar  
3 but just  
4 just become more solid with cases  
5 umm  
6 I do not remember any rules  
7 for  
8 grammar  
9 uhh
really
I just
sort of
remember what sounds right
there’s so many different cases in the language
I’d like to be able to more
ummm
more easily use the correct grammar in different situations
cause I was never really good at grammar
I got a lot of the vocabulary
and I figured that you know
it was more important for me to know the different words
than to
than to exactly know all of the different grammar
or how the words change
depending on what part of speech they are
(Anelisa, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

The hedging and repetitions (lines 3, 5, 9, 10-12, 16, 22) are a conversational performance of ambivalence, in this case towards the notion of grammatical knowledge in language acquisition. As she knows I am a linguist, she may desire to show that she knows and appreciates grammar, although the language learning methods taught at StepOut downplay such knowledge. For Anelisa, grammar seems to mean underlying rules (line 6), which help predict correct (line 17) or exact (line 23) use of case marking (lines 4, 15, 17) or derivational morphology (lines 24-25). “I just sort of remember what sounds right” (lines 11-13) is the kind of statement that a user of sociocultural methods should ideally be making to describe their performance. However, Anelisa displays guilt in having to resort to “what sounds right” instead of knowing (lines 2, 15-17) how nouns properly decline according to the seven cases of Serbo-Croatian.

She makes a clear distinction between lexical knowledge, which she feels she can do more easily (line 21) and morphosyntactic knowledge, which is “less important” (line 21). Ironically, Serbo-Croatian uses a number of high-frequency clitics (such as (-)sam and (-)cu) which appear in both free and bound, root and suffix positions and thus
defy any division between “words” and “grammar”. Anelisa’s privileging of lexical knowledge over morphosyntactic knowledge, described in Section 5.4.5 in the context of the StepOut training, is a dominant theme which runs throughout all of the interviews I have done.

Learning morphological paradigms is a key area where sociocultural method’s effectiveness remains untested, and judging by these learners, the effectiveness of sociocultural methods in acquiring complex fusional morphology is doubted. That being said, learners believe there are also limits to the usefulness of metalinguistic knowledge and explicit instruction in acquiring such forms. Even though a local Bosnian field worker admits that “classroom is the obvious way” to learn languages she cautions, “honestly, classes are not that great, what I’ve seen so far because most of the time they just learn grammatic things, grammar, and they do not really know how to speak. Just most of the time I’ve seen people trying so hard to put everything grammatically in order instead of just talking”. An overemphasis on recognizing, but being unable to use, morphosyntactic paradigms is seen as the main weakness of explicit instruction, especially if opportunities to orally practice such forms are missing. The purported strength of the GPA is to get learners to be able to use morphosyntactic forms in conversation, without being aware of how all such forms are related to each other in grammatical tables.

6.2.5 Resistance to the GPA more influential than StepOut

Overall, the model of second language learnerhood presented at StepOut seems less influential to these individuals than their own experiences with and preferences for relying on metalinguistic knowledge and explicit instruction. Tara’s verdict of the GPA,
despite being excited to use it after StepOut is as follows, with “the book” standing in for formal, academic learning.

1 So the bottom line is
2 Is if you’re coming
3 And your main job is in English
4 I do think the book helps
5 Especially if you’re an adult
(Tara, Hungary, field interview 2012)

Tara, trained as a teacher, doubts the strong analogy between adult learning and child learning, recognizing that adults can and should use explicit metalinguistic knowledge, the type that children don’t have about their native language. As she continues, she illustrates this with a metalinguistic description of “to have” in Hungarian, which she learned “by the book” and not using sociocultural methods.

1 I just
2 that’s just
3 now I know I do not do anything the way they said (at StepOut)
4 the book is good for learning to say “I have”
5 which is difficult in Hungarian because there’s no verb for “have”
6 in Hungarian its “nekem van”
7 and I haven’t figured out what “nekem” means yet
8 because it means a few things!
9 so when you
10 like in German you just say “ich habe”
11 you do not do that
12 in Hungarian
13 you say “nekem van kutya” which is “dog” (the correct form should be “nekem van kutyam”)
14 so I learned “kutya” from the picture thing (meaning the GPA)
15 but “nekem van” I learned from the textbook
(Tara, Hungary, field interview 2012)

Tara, who has made significant progress in Hungarian and says that she loves language learning, is externally representing her ongoing inductive metalinguistic analysis of Hungarian, relying on German (line 10) and English (lines 4-8) as a form of mediation. She acquired an uninflected noun “kutya” from using the GPA, which she
calls “the picture thing” (line 14) but she needs “the book” (lines 4, 15) to offer her adult mind the shortcuts and ladders of explicit knowledge; these would take too long to deduce by approaching language like a child.

Donna, a long-term field worker in Italy, who learned several languages using academic approaches, and is influential in the design of the StepOut program, made the following insightful observation of Love the World field workers like Tara: “People have only ever learned one way in school. Their impression is that no one is using [the GPA]. That impression makes me feel unwilling to go down the path. What they are trying to do is teaching non-traditional methods to people who succeed in traditional learning”. Indeed, all Love the World field workers are university graduates, and desire to work with university graduates. They tend to have succeeded in traditional learning environments, and to be around students in the host country who also succeed in traditional methods. The description of village life used in examples in the GPA training methods seem far removed from learners who are interacting with literate, educated, multilingual students at European universities. The inertia of academic learning is behind them, and their initial enthusiasm for the GPA seems to fade. Julie, in Sweden, directly stated that with her classroom experience, both in college and as a Sprinter, she felt it was too late to change the way she was learning. When her plans to use the Swedish government classes were stymied because of visa issues, she was at a total loss of how to approach language learning, and did not seriously consider the GPA or taking the initiative to pursue sociocultural learning, learning which places a high value on learner autonomy. In the next section, I will specifically discuss this aspect, how the view of learner autonomy affects learners’ decisions about language learning.
6.3 Beliefs about Learner Autonomy

Greg Lomen (2007) describes the spotty track record of success in field-based academic language schools which cater to the missions and development community. He claims they rely on behaviorist pedagogy and present only the standard literate variety of the target language, which may or may not be the appropriate dialect or register for field workers to learn. He argues that by using the GPA, a field worker will “have more control over the source of information than in most schools and he can choose people from his specific target community”. This learner autonomy, that it is the learner who drives the lesson, chooses which speaker to apprentice himself to, and sets his own pace, is often hailed as a strength of the GPA.

There is some disagreement among sociocultural methods over how learner autonomy should best be implemented. In both the PILAT and the LAMP methods, the learners do all of the initiation. The PILAT method training which I observed at MTI in 2011 consisted mainly in equipping learners to lead their own activities. A sample PILAT lesson is included in Appendix E. The directions are written for the language learner, and learners decide every word or structure they want to learn, guided by the instructions in the carefully-developed lessons. The native speaker of the target language plays a very passive role, providing only the input solicited by the learner, only when directed by the learner, and as often as the learner requests it. The PILAT staff call the native speaker “a language machine”, warning PILAT users that “the machine will just keep repeating [a form] until you decide to stop it”. The developers and trainers of the PILAT method then are highly skeptical about how autonomous the learners in the GPA really are, and the “important step of discovery, self-initiated and originated is missed” (Gradin and Tepley,
personal communication). In the GPA, the instructions are written largely for the language helper to read and implement. The helper is the master, the learner the apprentice, and it is the helper who initiates activities, who chooses which and how much input to generate, and for how long. Thus while both approaches are “learner centered”, it could be argue that the GPA is not “learner-driven” in the way its users sometimes market it.

While the GPA maybe helper-driven, it does require learners to take a great degree of initiative, choosing the language helper, training their language helper, collecting and providing materials, making their own recordings, re-listening and “massaging” elicited narratives, shaping and elaborating the helper-generated input. All written materials must be of their own creation and design. Works such as Little (2007) and Lamb & Reinders (2008) present a wide range of research supporting learner autonomy, and how it can bootstrap language acquisition. Love the World field workers, seem to be skeptical of learner autonomy however. While it may be good in theory, they feel ill-equipped to manage or direct their own language acquisition projects, and this is a reason for rejecting the GPA.

Simon, who had spent two years in the Sprint internship and three years as an International Staff learning his host country’s language, expressed a great deal of frustration with learner autonomy. In his country, the GPA has been turned into a packaged curriculum targeting precisely that language, called TalkFreely (a pseudonym). This curriculum has well-developed and clearly designed activities at each phase, explained both in English to the learners and in the host language to potential language helpers. Trained coaches are provided to troubleshoot implementation. Compared to users
who would want to implement the GPA in Slovene or Hungarian, much of the work required of the learner has been done for him. Still, Simon echoes the frustrations of the Love the World workers in his country that I spoke to who used this method.

Initially I tried to use the self-guided methodology (the GPA), with language helpers, and there’s a program that is specifically for [our country] called [TalkFreely]. It’s good - very thorough, lots of resources, the company that made it… you have two language coaches to help you get started. They find your first language helper, check in with you weekly for a while, then by month. We (Love the World field workers in his city) weren’t set up for that, so that the coaching aspect of it, and the fact I’m not that self-disciplined, I found it really hard to make the [TalkFreely] program work fully. I sort of you know - if it was a 3 legged stool (language helper, environment and me), I was basically using one leg which was the language helper. (Simon, Country Z, field interview 2010)

He felt frustrated by the mix of helper-driven but learner-initiated activities in TalkFreely.

I was fine with them driving, and responding to what they were bringing up, but it was hard to be motivated to learn something when I did not know it. They would say “oh let’s learn this grammar point” and I was like “ok”, but it turned out later not the most needed. I would be just like… “NOW what don’t I know, NOW what do not I know, NOW what don’t I know”, and try to come up with curriculum that way. (Simon, Country Z, field interview 2010)

Simon is a fairly competent speaker, but has attributed his success largely to academic materials, the metalinguistic analysis skills learned in his linguistics minor at university, and his self-confessed language aptitude. A learner in Country Y put her resistance to the GPA’s demands for autonomy this way.

1. being in a group in a classroom was better,
2. not self-paced or self motivated
3. I do better with someone else leading a curriculum
4. not self led
5. I do not have a lot of time to study
6. so I do not want to prepare what to do in my lesson
7. I’d rather have it boiled down.
8. biggest obstacle is how to make time for it
9. with four kids, two at home all the time
   (Laverne, Country Y, field interview 2010)

Two field workers in Sweden also relied heavily on classes which allow them to
effectively “outsource” their autonomy, and the responsibility for proficiency. Julie said she “feels ambiguous without a structured language learning program”. When she discovered she couldn’t participate in the government classes for another six months, she felt she had to “scrape together some sort of language learning method some sort of ways to improve” her Swedish. Since she tested out of the pre-packaged government program, she was at a loss how to proceed when responsible for driving her own language learning. In a staff meeting she asked for prayer that she “could continue to learn Swedish better without official structure”. Julie’s teammate Lucy had been struggling to learn any Swedish, something she pinned on her inability to effectively handle the leeway and learner autonomy entrusted to her by Love the World. She confessed to feeling nervous about starting “real” classes because “[the government program] is my last excuse for not speaking Swedish. If the class does not work I’m out of excuses, and at an impasse”.

Love the World as an organization puts a high value on learner autonomy and individual responsibility, and is reluctant to assess their workers’ proficiency or intervene in holding them accountable. Although its workers say they desire and appreciate autonomy and flexibility, when it comes to language learning, they often feel ill-prepared and ill-equipped to manage that autonomy. They turn to formal classrooms largely to avoid spending time on the preparations needed to implement the GPA, and they would prefer to have a class or teacher or program be responsible for their attainment. As Dwight Gradin, MTI director, said “missionaries think that a language school will give them everything they need”. Even in best case scenarios, like with the TalkFreely program, learner autonomy seems to be more of a source of anxiety and frustration, than a source of motivation and empowerment. This tendency would argue for Love the World
to take a larger role in assessing and guiding the language learning of its field workers, or else devote much more time to training them to manage autonomy in their acquisition, perhaps training them in the approach later than at StepOut.

6.4 Beliefs about Assessment/Accountability

Although in the previous section I argued that learners’ anxiety about autonomy created an opportunity for Love the World to support their field workers through more accountability, in this section I will present the beliefs about assessment and accountability which keep Love the World from taking on that responsibility. “Accountability” is a positive term in evangelicalism (Bartkowski 2000, Miller 2002, Elisha 2008). It is seen as a necessary condition for spiritual growth and healthy development. A letter from the director of East Asia operations for Love the World illustrated the need for accountability in language learning within the organization, both in attitude, expectations, and actual implementation.

Expats had unrealistic expectations of how fast they could learn a language, and few ways to measure their progress. Many spent more time planning for language learning or complaining about language learning than actually putting in time working on the language. The more frustrated they got, the harder it was for them to objectively look at their situation and take steps to improve it. (From internal report on language learning in East Asia region, bold mine)

In every interview, I raised the question of accountability to progressing in language learning. Most of the field workers responded that it will be crucial, but that they know they cannot rely on the organization to provide them with accountability, as Amelia, Eric and Kathleen report here at their StepOut training.

1 I: what kind of accountability do you think he’ll have for language learning
2 or do you want to have to make sure that you’re keeping on track?
E: you know I think we’ll have from our team
a. we’ll have accountability with each other no?
4 A: I cannot take that for granted
to
a. to see we have
5 E: true
(…)
6 A: I’ll have to really initiate with the accountability
7 because I think they will be very gracious
8 so
9 but I need really to be the one to initiate it
10 keep on it
11 ask them to keep challenging me
12 yeah it’ll be interesting to see
13 maybe I’ll be surprised by that level
14 maybe I’ll be like “hold on” “slow down”
15 it’ll be kind of like {sucking teeth}
16 but I think the team
17 will be good enough
18 there’ll be accountability available
19 just within the group of people I know
(Eric and Amelia, Hungary, StepOut 2011)

1 I: what kinds of accountability do you want to have?
2 K: my husband is goal setter
3 so he is huge accountability
4 if I set goals he will hold me accountable to them.
5 also the way team is set up
6 doing ministry with two other couples
7 communicating with those women on appointments
8 “hey I’d encourage you to make me speak in Italian”
9 or “if I do not know a word, help me out”
(i.e. hoping older ICS women will help her)
(Kathleen, Italy, StepOut 2010)

Just as the GPA asks learners to be responsible for their own language learning, which leads them to rely on academic methods of learning, Love the World asks learners to be responsible for their own accountability and assessment, leading to an ad hoc system which relies primarily on social networks and internal motivation. As motivation flags, or learners become reluctant to turn their close friendships or spouses into face-threatening relationships which police language policy, accountability to progress in
proficiency is also lost.

6.4.1 Assessment downplayed or done in Academic ways

Love the World is known by workers within and outside of the organization as not being very “hard core” on language learning, a word explicitly used by Theresa. Her husband Mark describes this as being a positive characteristic.

Love the World does not have accountability like the Christian Missionary Alliance, but maybe that is good, it does not fit our mindset as much. The Baptists, cannot have a car ‘til they pass a language test… that is too harsh, it’s hard on families who have to all take the bus. (Mark, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

In fact Mark believes that Love the World workers have been just as successful as the CMA field workers, but with a lot less stress and formality. When describing his own decision that he was “done with language learning” he admits this was not done in consultation with his direct superiors.

1 I: you’re under Zagreb’s office right?
2 so did they release you from language learning responsibilities?
3 M: no
4 I: you just released yourself
5 M: yes there’s no way that he had…
6 no checking up on that or anything
7 now it’s…
8 I knew I needed to do one year and a half year
9 and in some sense I did most of that
10 I cheated a little bit on the spring
11 but there was never any “you’ve graduated
12 you’re a language speaker”
   (Mark, Bosnia, field interview 2012)

Part of this reluctance to hold learners accountable comes from a perceived threat to emotional health, raising the “affective filter” (Krashen 1982) through unrealistic expectations. The East Asia field workers responsible for overseeing Love the World’s workers there “tried to encourage team leaders to be realistic about the expectations
(whether openly stated or implied) that they put on new team members in regards to language learning”, (from internal letter on language acquisition in East Asia) as the expectations for progress were felt to have lead to jealousy, comparison and demotivation. Mary was hesitant about assessment and accountability because of Greg Thomson’s own views on the matter.

I’m not sure what I believe about assessment- it’s good and certain people it can help motivate them, but um Greg Thomson, the guy who has influenced me more than any other, he feels like assessment can work against motivation and growth in people too. (Mary, personal interview, StepOut 2010)

Thomson says that a well-designed task will have its own assessment, so there is no need for overt assessment of proficiency. If learners solely used the GPA, it may be true that little assessment or accountability would be needed. But given that learners interpret and implement the GPA in a wide variety of ways, and most do not use it, nor any other systematic approach to language acquisition at all, then ongoing assessment or accountability may have more of a place. Unlike many organizations that can fire underperforming personnel, missions and development NGOs which rely on field workers to raise their own support, do not have this kind of leverage over their workers, and may be reluctant to do so, as it is seen as at odds with a “nurturing and caring culture”. As Michael in Italy dryly observed, “they cannot fire you. We’re raising our support, you cannot get fired. There is not anything they can do to you; there is nothing anyone can do to you to hold you accountable. They can say something mean to you or bad about you but they’re not going to do that”. Michael’s understanding is not entirely accurate, as Love the World staff assured me that staff are fired regularly. However he is correct in noting that this almost never happens for not meeting SLA goals, at least not
immediately. According to Miriam Jerome (personal communication), workers who do not acquire the language tend to leave the field on their own, but for other stated reasons.

Kristin, headed to Slovenia, was confused about who was supposed to be keeping her on track with language learning:

We have a regional director in Budapest but he’s the director of all the campuses in Eastern Europe, so I doubt there will be any reporting to them directly. It’ll be more like, once a semester like, ‘How’s it going?’ ‘Fine. I don’t know...’ [said in a dismissive tone]. That’s a good question (about accountability). I think accountability would be key at least for me.

To this last statement, her teammate Erica agreed, “I’m an external motivated person. Deadlines and star charts”. Despite reluctance at all levels to assume responsibility for accountability and assessment, I found much evidence that there is a desire (at least theoretical) for more accountability.

6.4.2 Requests for more Assessment/Accountability

Most participants did not desire an assessment that would result in a loss of privileges, but one that would at least helpfully measure their progress and indicated directions for growth. In a conversation with Mary at StepOut, I summarized my findings on the GPA training to her in this way: “several of them (field workers) mentioned they were trying to figure out where they are on the scale, 01B and two and three and stuff (referring to the phases and proficiency levels within the GPA) and wish that they sort of knew”. Serbo-Croatian learners were one group who expressed this desire for more assessment, which began at StepOut and increases in the field.

1 [I’d like] something like
2 like I do not know
3 assessment that shows like
4 where are you in the language
5 so that you could know where to start
6 because for me it’s just
I would like “oh my goodness what do I do?”
because you know
I do not know where I am
(Theresa, Bosnia, field interview 2012)

C: it’s just like I would like someone to give me a road map
like this is where you are on the learning train
like
you’re at this point like,
J: tests at each level, you could take a test and
you’re at level 1
you need to be at level 6 eventually
yeah it’s just like I do not know so hard to feel like cause
cause all you have to really compare it to is I do not speak like a Bosnian
You know like “I’m not there yet”
but like I also know like I’m not where I was like two months ago
but like “where am I?”
Cause I don’t know how
where really I am in this learning process
and I think for me it would be a little like
a little bit more endurance if I could be like
Aaaah like
Yes like I can see in my map two months ago I was here and now I’m here
my next stop is here
But it would just help to get perspective a little bit more
(Bosnia, informal conversation, 2012)

In these extracts we see that the assessment these learners want is not a score on a test,
but a map (lines 1, 18), a way that learners can locate themselves from above (line 20) on
the “terrain of learning”, (lines 12-14, 18-19) so that no learner gets “lost” or “detoured”
in the language learning process. This metaphor of location may be helpful for Love the
World when communicating any assessment plan they make.

Nick, an experienced field worker and language learner, said “we need more
accountability that you need to reach a certain standard before you can move on to other
work”, to which his wife added “[progress in language] is a heartfelt desire but just not a priority”. Other workers in Country Y agreed.

1. more accountability on the front end
2. when someone first arrives would be helpful
3. having a more defined system when someone first comes in
4. we want to have certain evaluation points
5. to say you have reached this level
6. so you’re given more ministry responsibility
7. we got pulled out of language learning because work was growing
8. and we were needed
9. other organizations are really strict
10. for two years you do not do anything but language
    (Laverne, field visit 2010)

1. we look at summer as more free and spend time on language
2. but I cannot speak for others on team
3. but I do not think we’ve had more time
4. or made more time to work on it
5. we had that plan as a team
6. but it hasn’t worked out
7. it would help me to have someone asking
8. or for me to have to report to someone
    (Laverne, field visit 2010)

1. there needs to be some sort of rewards consequences
2. I’m showing up to class
3. even though I’m not doing anything else
4. there needs to be more class time
5. where we are meeting as a group
6. but it’s scheduled individual throughout the week
7. to practice the stories
8. over and over again
9. my biggest problem is that I’m doing them on my own
    (Niles, field visit 2010)

In Country Y, they had to pass a “Level 2.5” proficiency test in a locally available academic language test, but according to Nick, this level is still functionally below what is needed for daily living. All field workers in that country indicated that after someone did attain “level 2.5 proficiency” that the motivation to learn the language was gone, and
most field workers relied on their knowledge of English, or another widely spoken regional language.

6.4.3 Assessment/Accountability exposes learners to guilt over lack of progress

Although Laverne and Niles, among others, expressed this desire for more accountability, Nick’s offers to help in this area, taking on the role of a language coach, were rebuffed. According to Nick, language is a sensitive area for presentation as a field worker, and there is loss of face involved when a teammate, particularly one who is a more proficient speaker of the target language, tries to implement accountability. Amelia, refers to this sensitivity and face threat in the following extract.

```
1 you know the accountability outside of there
2 outside of some of the mom friends that I had
3 I know it can be a touchy kind of situation too
4 because people are sensitive about where they are at in the language
5 but as far as accountability
6 but because Hungarian traditionally has been so hard
7 and because they do not want people to feel like stupid
8 because of the point that they’re
9 I think there’s just been a lot of grace (from Love the World) in the past
   (Amelia, Hungary, StepOut 2011)
```

This sensitivity (lines 3-4) can set up a vicious cycle couched in “grace” (line 9). As language proficiency is a core component of these field workers’ claims to “success”, in presentations both to self and to supporters back home, a lack of progress compared to expectations can lead to guilt. This guilt at not being a better learner can make them resist assessment (Theresa: “It makes me feel like a failure when people correct me”) or accountability. Field workers in Country Y and Country Z say that “even if someone like a language coach or the national leader calls them and says ‘how is language doing?’ they can always come up with some answer that sounds good and no one is really- there’s no
way [a hypothetical accountability coach] can know that or measure that”. This resistance to assessment or accountability however creates further lack of progress, which can create more guilt, which feeds the cycle. Many countries place field workers in groups not based on proficiency, but based on the year they arrived on country. This is done so that field workers “do not feel bad that people who got there more recently are way more advanced”. The result of this attempt to protect their feelings can have an opposite effect, with less proficient learners feeling more overwhelmed and falling further behind, exposed to the boredom of more proficient learners.

In Country Z, one field worker felt immense frustration that teammates who had been in the field for many years had barely passed Phase One of the GPA. National leaders, who had “never had training or education in language acquisition” keep giving these struggling field workers “another year, another year, another year” with no consequences involved and no progress made. Indeed, field workers are often promoted to positions of national or regional leadership because of administration skills or personal qualities, and not based on their language acquisition. Several national leaders themselves struggle with proficiency in the host language, and thus cannot serve as role models for younger field workers of successful acquisition. Their lack of experience and success can be a source of resentment from younger learners, both those who are more proficient than their national leaders, or for those who are less proficient, but feel like they get no helpful advice from leaders untrained and inexperienced in language acquisition.

6.4.4 Question of language coaching

While Mary, in-line with the GPA’s methodological assumptions, may hesitate to advocate for assessment, she advocated for accountability through the use of language
coaches, a technique presented and strongly recommended at the ICLL conferences. In Mary’s recommendations to authorities at the global headquarters, she has tried to sell the idea of more support for language coaches in a list of bulleted points for improvement.

Develop and train qualified and interested [StepOut alumni] as language coaches and equip them to train language helpers, troubleshooting language learning issues as they arise. Time commitment: One half day per week, this makes it perfect for moms to excel at this! Wouldn’t it be encouraging for [International Staff] to have someone in this role near them—in their city or on their team? The [Southern Baptist Convention’s International Missions Board] have a network of coaches in place—at least 10-12 in each of their 8 areas of the world. This has increased the effectiveness and longevity of their staff significantly. (Mary, in letter to authorities at global headquarters)

Mary does try to sell language coaches at the StepOut training, and some participants seemed receptive to the idea, describing what a language coach is, as they understood it.

They, they talked this morning about having the possibility of having a language coach that would call you, you know, and have regular appointments on the phone with you. And they’re you know their priority would be to encourage you and help you think of different things you could do to keep pushing you. So that could be some accountability, but then also on our team I think we have pretty good accountability. (Jack, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

Jack presumes that the International Staff on his team would provide enough accountability. This seems to have been the case. Although they had literal direct oversight from their national or regional office as regards language learning, Mark and Theresa, Jack and Anelisa all have met many of their language learning goals, and have attained a proficiency which goes beyond basic daily communication. Anelisa, in response to what kind of accountability she would have, replied at StepOut:

1 A: and then this...The language what would you call it?
2 I: coach?
3 J: the language coach
4 A: the language coaches we’re offered
5 and that’s more us being proactive about

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Anelisa strikes on one problem with language coaches. The “coaching” responsibility is often given to someone whose job is to care for the emotional health of Love the World staff (lines 12-16). Such coaches are reluctant to bring up the anxiety-inducing fact of low language proficiency (lines 6-7). And if they do, it is often with more a sympathetic heart, rather than practical advice or holding staff to a given standard. Even if a learner would want a coach, the coach would have to be very familiar with the GPA, which would require them to receive more training than is available at StepOut. In fact, some coaches have gone through the formal GPA training in the last several years, which would solve the problem of self-discipline (lines 2-5) that Simon describes in the following interview taken in 2010.

1 it’d be great to have coaches
2 they’d have to be pretty familiar with [TalkFreely]
3 to be maximally helpful with coaching it
4 if you’re self-disciplined it’s great
5 and if you’re not self-disciplined
6 I’m apparently NOT self-disciplined
7 I read through the whole book, and I philosophically 100% agree with it,
8 but I could NOT get my head around it
9 it’s HARD TO GRASP the system
10 how to actually make it work
11 and I beat myself up trying to square peg myself into a round hole
12 for like four months
13 I did some good language learning
14 I’d say the system
15 20% of it is what I actually used
   (Simon, Country Z, field visit 2010)

Even when qualified coaches are made available however, Mary expresses frustration
with staff’s willingness to use them (lines 9-11), despite what they may intend at the time
of StepOut (line 1).

1 two dozen said they want a coach
2 sign up for one
3 but they equivocate
4 only about six are actually availing themselves of language coach
5 skyping every other or three weeks
6 “we’re going to a wedding”
7 “ why do not we start in September”
8 email
9 never hear back
10 then eventually
11 “we’ve decided to go home because our daughter is not adjusting well”
12 or something like that
13 I’m thinking that MIGHT be part of it
14 but it might be that you haven’t learned the language well
15 this is underreported
16 because it’s not an acceptable thing to say
17 that you did not learn the language
18 (Mary, interview, StepOut 2010)

The logistics of making a coach work create the opportunities for avoiding a coach, if a
learner feels guilty about their lack of progress. A learner who is falling behind will try to
avoid the coach, knowing that the organization’s character is “to keep giving grace”. Eventually the tabooed lack of language proficiency (lines 16-17) leads to isolation, and
leaving the field (line 11). Several of my participants are considering leaving the field, for
reasons (they admitted to me, if not their supporters) related to language barriers and a
lack of language proficiency.
6.4.5 Academic assessment: the case of Italy

When national offices hear about field workers’ frustration over this lack of accountability, and the need for an assessment mechanism, leaders may turn to academic tests designed to measure foreigner’s preparation for entering the university. The following quote from Russia’s language policy illustrates this.

A newly arriving IR/ICS will have as his/her goal to become “functionally fluent” within 2 years of arrival in country. For the sake of objective evaluation, this is measured by the passing of the Level One Exam for Russian Fluency given in universities. (Internal document, Russian language policy)

These academic measurements are often testing learners on a very different repertoire of linguistic knowledge than Love the World field workers need for their daily life and for effectively carrying out their ministry projects. Field workers who are seen as highly successful language learners by the host nationals they work with often are fluent speakers, but have little or no academic writing ability, which is what these assessment instruments largely measure. This is another example of how policy makers, with little knowledge of or training in language acquisition, turn to a model of learnerhood - academic standardized testing - which comes from their own personal experience as students. Policy makers who implement such tests reported not having heard other effective ways to assess language proficiency.

The country where assessment seemed most contentiously applied was in Italy. In France, which is very similar to Italy in terms of the organization’s goals and projects, language assessment is important, but very differently than in Italy. In France it is done orally, by native French speaking staff, after participants have all participated in language classes. In Italy field workers are left much more to their own devices, given a high
degree of autonomy over how to learn the language. The assessment that field workers must work towards is the CILS (Certificazione di Italiano come Lingua Straniera), an academic assessment of Italian as a foreign language. The official language policy for Italy reads:

Every International Staff member will be held to the accountability of passing the CILS Level 2 exam. CILS is an accredited standard within Italy that is the base requirement for a foreign student to be able to take university classes in Italian. The CILS exams are given twice a year—December and June and include written, reading and oral portions to be passed. (Italian national policy document)

This policy is unpopular among all the field workers I spoke with in Italy. High aptitude learners complain that CILS Level 2 is far too low for the level of Italian actually needed to complete their tasks. The most common complaint however, is that CILS is testing the wrong language skills; “passing a written exam, does not make you an effective communicator” said one experienced Italian field worker, “I do not need a test to tell me whether I can communicate”. Martina, an American responsible for language assessment and accountability, was seen as having chosen the CILS because “It’s measureable, it worked for me, so I’m going to apply it”. Donna, a field worker, felt negatively about this assessment. She explained her resistance to it (line 15) as follows.

1 D: you know there’s this CILS test that everyone is taking
2 maybe you can tell me?
3 Martina is gifted in languages
4 and SOMEHOW
5 when they were trying to come up with a standard for proficiency in Italy
6 they came up with this test CILS
7 and the level they want is to be at level II
8 which means you can enroll in the University
9 and you study intensely
10 and it’s more like you’re studying how to take the test
11 even more than just reviewing all the grammar that you need
12 that the people told me
13 and it’s a five-hour test
so I hear that and I’m like
“there’s no way I’m going to do that”
I: do you think you would be able to pass it like if you took it?
D: oh no no no!
(Donna, Italy, field interview 2012)

In my interview with Martina, these observations were confirmed; she is a self-described high-aptitude learner, successful in academic studies, and she was able to translate the CILS classes she took into fluent and effective speaking abilities. When asked to help better assess and support the many struggling learners in Italy, she turned to her own academic history to come up with a ready-made assessment system. She also needed more academic registers for her role in the national office. There are classes which teach CILS all over Italy, but many of these classes literally teach the test. They teach study skills, tricks for answering questions, not language proficiency. Students in those classes mostly speak in English to each other. What’s worse, it is reported to be fairly easy to buy the scores necessary to pass the test. The test preparation classes are perhaps the worst possible environment for being interactionally exposed to authentic, socioculturally situated input. Some field workers were able to pass CILS Level II, even though they were not able to functionally converse in ways needed for their work. Once they had passed the test, there was little incentive to continue focusing on Italian study. The most proficient Italian speakers on staff never even bothered to take the test, knowing that their Italian was more than sufficient. Additionally learners in Italy really had no practical support or assessment before taking the test. They were mainly told to “study for the CILS”.

Martina knew very little about the GPA; even though she had learned about it StepOut, her memory of the details of the GPA was fuzzy. Although Steve, positioned as
high aptitude by his teammates, enjoyed the test, and even passed Level III, most other field workers, when they heard I was meeting with Martina, begged me to mention the test to her, and to persuade her to use a more natural means of assessment. I did indeed speak with Martina about assessment, and in Section 9.3.4 I will offer some thoughts on how assessment might be best implemented for a population like these Love the World field workers in Italy.

6.5 ATTAINMENT AS A FUNCTION OF APTITUDE

In my first interview with her, at StepOut 2011, Erica admitted, apologetically, to me “I guess I have always taken the copout attitude that some people are good at languages and some people are not. You’re born with it. You’re born this way. Like Lady Gaga”. This idea of an inherent language aptitude, which you are born with, has intrigued language acquisitionists for much of the twentieth century (Gardner and Lambert 1959, Carroll 1964, Gardner and Lambert 1965, Rubin 1975, Skehan 1989, Carroll 1990, Skehan 1996, Alderson et al. 1997, DeKeyser 2000), resulting in assessments like the Modern Language Aptitude Test (1959) and the Defense Language Aptitude Battery. Sparks et al. (2011) define aptitude as statistically consisting of four separate skills or subcomponents, which I summarize below.

1) Language Analysis skill, composed of L1 and L2 language comprehension, grammar, vocabulary, and inductive language learning

2) Phonology/Orthography skill, composed of L1 and L2 phonemic coding and phonological processing measures

3) IQ/Memory skill, composed of L1 intelligence and L2 paired-associate learning measures

4) Self-Perceptions of language skills

While aptitude as a construct is downplayed by Love the World and most missions and
development organizations (Miriam Jerome, personal communication), the idea of aptitude is an active component of my participants’ learnerhood, and used to explain a wide variety of phenomena.

6.5.1 Appeals to aptitude to explain differential attainment

As noted in Section 5.2.3, aptitude is downplayed in the GPA, which promises that any learner can learn any language. Caasi in her (2005) analysis of Thomson’s GPA, uses several sources (in the case of Sasaki 1996 and Gardner et al.1997, somewhat misleadingly) to show that individual variables do not consistently predict attainment.

It is interesting to me that, while certain characteristics such as aptitude, motivation, and self-confidence appear in general to be helpful to conscious learning of language, current research does not clearly indicate a consistent correlation between development of fluency and possession of such characteristics (Ellis 1985, Gardner, Tremblay and Masgoret 1997, Robinson 1997, Sasaki 1996, Thomson 1993b). (Caasi 2005:4)

The downplaying of aptitude is again ultimately rooted in Krashen’s strong analogy positions, that adults still have access to the language acquisition device as long as they get comprehensible input and have a low affective filter. For the learners in my study, they do have comprehensible input, some of it guaranteed at the “i+1 level”, yet fail to acquire the language. Faced with the cognitive dissonance between StepOut teaching rooted in Krashen’s and Thomson’s assumptions about potential universal acquisition, and the starkly differentiated patterns of attainment in the field, my participants appeal to aptitude to resolve this cognitive dissonance. Some learners position themselves and others as high aptitude.

I know people go through language differently and Hungarian being so hard sometimes it can take longer but you know with an aptitude for languages hopefully the two will balance each other out
and 100 hours will help me get to Phase II
(Amelia, Hungary, StepOut 2011)

Martina- Martina is gifted in languages
(Donna, Italy, field interview 2012)

Arthur even said that people were going around in sharing randomly in a
circle that he noticed that they were sharing in the Fibonacci sequence so
that he was able to **deduce the pattern** and figure out like... “oh this is the
order people are going in” and he would need a good ear to compute that.
So I think **he’s good at hearing.** (Paul, Sweden, field interview 2012)

I feel like language **comes easier** to me. Even though I have less time to devote to
it. (Jennifer, Slovenia, field interview 2012)

M: (About Brad’s Italian) It’s... it’s actually perfect- so perfect that
Italians are surprised to hear him speak English. They thought that he
wasn’t American. I would love to find out what he did. He has that,
he’s **got the kind of mind** where he retains things too.
S: Yeah he has the type of mind where he hears the word and he
remembers it, that he does not need to practice it, so I would say
**language came a lot quicker for him** because of that. (Michael and
Sara, Italy, StepOut 2011)

Still others position themselves or others as low aptitude learners, such as Donna in Italy.

Some of my friends thought that I would never learn Russian because it
was super hard. I **do not have a mathematical mind** and you need to
have a mathematical mind. With all of the cases, I could not put things in
categories. **I thought I had a learning disability** that it took me that long
to develop the new patterns in my brain to figure it out. (Donna, Italy,
field interview, 2012)

Many learners who felt self-conscious about their proficiency, pointed back to the fact
that they did badly in Spanish in high school, or had a bad memory for names- other
evidence to corroborate their claim that they had a low aptitude for languages. Ironically,
Michael, who was diagnosed with post-trauma aphasia and had a legitimate language
disability, proved to be a highly effective Italian learner, and made incredible strides with
language proficiency.
6.5.2 Appeals to aptitude leading to jealousy and judgment

One of the field workers at the Eastern European office in Budapest wrote to me “of course, there are always one or two language learning geniuses in every city, who make it seem like if you cannot learn a language to the point of fluency within a few months, you’re just stupid”. He also showed me the following memo from the East Asian office, written by the field worker overseeing language acquisition there.

People are naturally competitive, and language learning is hard work. Even for those who were putting in forty hours a week of language learning, getting to a point of relative fluency often took more than a year of uphill work. For fans of missionary biographies, this was not welcome news—almost all of those stories skip over the language learning phase and get straight to the ministry phase. (Letter from East Asia office on language learning)

In this excerpt, a competitiveness, and tension in team dynamics due to differential proficiency is alluded to. The tension comes from the fact that the low proficiency learners see themselves as “not measuring up”, not achieving the model of missions worker socialized through “missionary biographies”. Interestingly, “relative fluency” is here presented as taking “more than a year of uphill work”, whereas my participants often felt far from fluent even after three years of uphill work. This document, in attempting to correct how field workers underestimate the difficulty of language learning, actually perpetuates that underestimation through this unrealistic goal.

Donna cannot help feeling this tension, around coworkers with higher proficiency, “you know I was talking about [a proficient Italian learner]. I led him, and there was not one time he ever criticized my language ability and I’d say Brad is the same way but sometimes. ... It’s really hard for me with someone like Brad. He just thinks it’s easy, and I’m like... {sarcastically} okay... I do still feel [the difficulty]”. She recounted a story
about a retreat where she led a group in Italian. A younger but more proficient field worker was reported to have complained to the supervisor that the Italian was so broken that it was difficult to understand the content. “I’m just assuming it referred to me because I do not know who else”. She reported feeling really frustrated and judged when she felt like she had made herself adequately understood. Amelia in Hungary also reported differential aptitude as potentially causing hard feelings with other moms, hesitantly holding out her imagined success (lines 1,3), something she claims in a very hedged manner (lines 3-5) as a source of jealousy. Amelia enacts her reluctance to mention her language aptitude to other moms, by clearly implying, yet being unwilling to name the resulting jealousy, even to me (line 6).

1. Like I feel like I’ll be where I want to be
2. but I will not probably want to talk about language a lot with other moms
3. because maybe I’m more motivated and have more goals
4. and if I do start doing kind of
5. start doing well
6. like I do not want that to...
7. I just do not know that that will be part of our relationship
   (Amelia, Hungary, StepOut 2011)

Paul in Sweden also admitted feeling jealousy and tension toward Arthur, a high aptitude learner, an issue he had to work through with his national director, who told him that “comparison is the enemy of joy”. Mark also describes the team troubles caused by differential aptitude in the Sprinters he oversees, “there’s also been a problem that there’s some people love language and some people hate it, and so the people who love that are held back, or make the other people feel bad and are bitter”.

In summary, while aptitude is not part of Love the World’s recruiting, and is actively downplayed as a variable both by Mary at the StepOut training, and by the GPA, my participants do readily and frequently appeal to aptitude as the most important
descriptor of differential attainment. While Love the World may avoid talking about aptitude in an effort to seem nice, and to not demoralize people or make them feel defective, appeals to aptitude are face saving. If, as Mary claimed, motivation is the most important variable in predicting ultimate attainment, then field workers would be forced to conclude that their less-proficient teammates are unmotivated, and by extension lazy. If, on the other hand, they were “born this way”, as Erica joked, it is no longer a learner’s fault if he or she lags behind in proficiency. By appealing to aptitude, high proficiency learners can extend more charity to struggling learners, since aptitude is beyond their control. Appealing to aptitude also allows learners to feel “off the hook” for poor performance on assessments. It could be argued that, similar to many other NGOs and even missions and development agencies, there may be a place for helping learners discover their language aptitude, and using that as one factor in considering placements. Learners who self-identified as low-aptitude, and who were really struggling with Hungarian or Georgian (which present English L1 learners with a host of unfamiliarly phonological, morphological and syntactic categories), may have had a more positive experience learning an easier language like French or Spanish which have more lexical overlap and are genetically more closely related to the English L1.

6.6 ATTAINMENT AS A FUNCTION OF HOURS AND YEARS

In Section 4.5, I noted that Love the World’s language policies often invoke hours and years in prescribing the ideal language learning behaviors. In this section I examine how these policies get implemented and integrated into narratives of learnerhood.
6.6.1 Two-year policy

In many organizations, seen as “hard core” by my participants, field workers must obtain a certain degree of language proficiency before they are allowed to start their missions or development projects. This type of “no ministry before language learning” policy once was practiced within Love the World, though later it was deemed counterproductive for several reasons. First, as Love the World targets primarily urban and educated populations, it was found that the felt need for language proficiency was less than for workers in organizations which targeted rural areas. Second and most importantly, as the amount of money that field workers needed to raise continued to increase, it began to take longer and longer to assemble the resources needed. Within Love the World, this process is called “ministry partner development” (MPD), but it is in practice solicitation of funding pledges. Because American Love the World field workers are asked to raise funds to support local workers who do not have the same access to charitable capital, Love the World field workers raise considerably more than money than field workers within other organizations.

Since MPD can take two to three years, and supporters are investing considerable funds, field workers feel pressure and are impatient to begin reporting “results” immediately on arrival. Since most supporters have never learned a language, it could be hard to justify why they are spending $60,000 a year of donations to “just learn the language”. Rachel admitted to me “If I go home, what am I going to have to talk about? I do nothing! Umm I just learn the language all the time, and I cannot even really speak it”. Eric and his wife Amelia admit this as well.

1 E: I think I’m realizing just
2 when I was communicating to people too...
supporters and whatever
I think I kind of
found myself having a just kind of a like
“oh I’ll be able to get by”
or “we were able to do a lot in our sprint year with English “
not that I did not want to learn the language
or not that I did not care but
this felt like I was in kind of this false expectation
and the view of language learning is almost like a not viewing it as ministry
almost looking at it as a roadblock to ministry
because I
I had a really bad view of language
I do not really want to tell people that I’ve gotta do language learning
I was kind of looking at it as that’s not
I’m not I’m not going to be able to do ministry
so yeah it really was a bad view of
A: I think I did that too in the support process
(Eric and Amelia, Hungary, StepOut 2011)

Because of these realities, Love the World abandoned its strict two-year policy. However, as described in Section 4.5.5, the official language learning policies in all regions and in most countries, to the extent that there are official policies, dictate that language learning should be the priority, over “ministry”, for the first two years in the field. Even this “priority time” is “not a time for isolation from the team and team relationships” as the Russia country policy states, and “as soon as possible, the staff member should focus on opportunities to combine the practice of his/her language skills with ministry opportunities”. It is easy to see then how these two years could be so filled with “ministry opportunities” and English-mediated “team relationships” that little authentic target language interaction occurs. Mary, faced with reports of workers struggling to achieve sufficient proficiency in those first two years, felt the need to intervene in a letter to policy makers on the global level.

I am not suggesting that we return to the “2 years of language learning before you do ministry” type of policy—just that swinging in the opposite direction of no policy has harmed us. (Mary, letter to policy makers, 2010)
Her attempts to advocate for a more dedicated two years of language learning have been complicated by the institutional resistance to accountability and assessment described in the previous section. Even if the exact content of those two years has been watered down, the institutional belief that language learning is “just a matter of time”, and that proficiency is a natural function of “years” and “hours” permeates all levels of discourse about language learning, and is one of the foundational concepts in these learners’ second language learnerhood.

6.6.2 Language learning as a function of years “in language learning”

Kristin, an International Staff who plans to spend five years in Slovenia, justifies in a letter to her financial supporters why she has to spend so much time learning the language beginning: “Our director has asked us to focus just on language for the first year. He knows ministry can easily pull us away from this important step of entering into life in Slovenia”. Kristin communicated to me personally that she knew vaguely she was supposed to “do language” full-time for the first year, and half-time in her second year, and asked me for advice on how she should fill up that time. In fact most of her letters to supporters were filled with updates on language progress, prayers for language ability, and attempts to try to emphasize the relational and “ministry” opportunities that emerged from her dedicated language learning activities, such as tutoring and language courses. Amelia also insistently tries to get her husband Eric to commit during our interview to spending the first two years just on language, without getting into ministry.

{to me} my job is really encouraging him to be intentional about keeping the first year of ministry having **his main job just be** language learning
{to husband} **your primary job** is language. I know that much.  
(Amelia, Hungary, StepOut 2011)
This “two years” of language creates several different issues for the International Staff. Because the exact level of competence to be reached by the end of the two years is vaguely defined, International Staff are often uncertain about whether they actually “did language” well, especially as the desired fluency still eludes them. Theresa commented in an interview, “yeah I think, so I came in thinking I’m going to get this- give me one year and I’ll be really good. And umm, yet now it’s been 2 1/2 years, and I’m still not fluent - but definitely better than I was, that’s for sure”. Field workers in several countries complained about other long term field workers who had been in the field for more than two years, yet were still unable to carry out the kinds of tasks, such as “attend a meeting” or “have a spiritual conversation” in the host language.

One long-term International Staff member, who actually had a role in shaping the StepOut language training, does not buy the two-year policy. When asked about the two-year policy, she said “just keep trying- it does not matter how long you learn it. If you learn it in a year and I learn it in five, it does not matter, who cares?” First, this worker is assuming there is a threshold or standard one can reach where “you learn it”, when in fact the lack of this standard is apparent in most workers’ perception of Love the World. Secondly, if five years is the typical length of commitment to a field site, then it does matter if one reaches this threshold in one year or in five, as this affects how much time will be spent in the field as a proficient speaker of the host language. The “two-year” policy also forces learners to find ways to fill up time with sometimes ad hoc “language activities”, activities which do not necessarily expose the learners to deeply-processed, authentic, negotiated input.
The ministry calendar also takes away from learners’ abilities to spend “two years” on language. Mormon missionaries who I spoke with spend the entire six weeks of the six-week language program which prepares them for a two-year stint as missionaries, in immersive or instructional activities. Love the World field workers however, are frequently called away from their field sites by seminars, conferences and mandated theological classes, visits to the United States to see family and renew contacts with financial supporters, vacation time, and time spent leading or engaging the Sprint teams housed in their cities. As a result, up to two months of each year is not spent in the field, which has consequences for proficiency. Michael was in an Italian class with Kathleen, who went back to the US for six weeks during the summer, a typical summer holiday. Michael said that he noticed, and that Kathleen’s neighbors had commented to Kathleen as well, that a great deal of language attrition had occurred after six weeks of being in the US. Not every “year” is actually a continued year of language growth then.

6.6.3 Language learning as a function of dedicated hours

I haven’t talked about how many hours a week, but I want to do at least 20 hours a week. My focus will be doing language, but I do not know what that looks like in terms of hours in formal language times and being out in the culture. (Kathleen, Italy, StepOut 2010)

Being “in language” or “doing language” seems to be a catch-all term for any activity which exposes International Staff to host nationals. One couple serving in Italy said they were “in language” for a month. By this they meant meeting with language tutors in the mornings, and trying to practice Italian in the afternoons. They were warned by other field workers about the perils of being in language: “people said ‘it will stretch you’ and all I heard was ‘streeeeetch.’“ After two weeks of being “in language”, they got sick and “felt like they were running on empty”, so they decided to “take time out
from being ‘in language.’” This couple is widely reported to have the lowest proficiency, although they have been in Italy for many years.

I observed many participants as they engaged in activities which they considered to be “doing language”, and the actual exposure to host language input during that “hour in the sky” varied widely, from an intensive well-instructed tutoring session which exposed a learner to hundreds of negotiated forms, to going to a campus to find someone to chat with (which consisted of less than fifteen minutes of actual host language interaction out of that “hour”), to watching a TV episode in English with subtitles in the host language. Learners measure their own progress in “hours”, and internal and external accountability comes from making sure they are “checking off those language hours”.

Hundreds of references to “hours of language learning” are found in my data set. A successful learner of Serbo-Croatian was said to have “killed it learning language last year- 50 hours a week. That made it harder for his wife though to find the time”. Michael, whose goal is “3 hours a day of language”, said that those hours include conversation and watching movies. “Talking with the saleswoman next door at the frutteria is 30 minutes. An episode of friends is 30 minutes. It’s easy to get 3 hours a day”. At one point he expressed frustration that he thought my presence had brought him under three hours for a day. When I asked him how much he had done, he listed that he had spoken 1 hour 25 minutes in Italian at the university (only about 45 minutes of actual Italian conversation), another 10-15 minutes speaking in stores in evening (a total of four minutes of Italian conversation), and 80 minutes teaching math in Italian (which involved about 28 minutes of Italian conversation). After reciting this list, he announced, “Yes I did it today!”
In the Sweden team, I noticed much agitation among my participants about how they would get in the required “twenty hours of language”. When their original plan of taking government sponsored language courses fell through, Julie complained that it forced her to rely solely on meeting with a tutor and to come up with her own activities to meet her imposed target time of two to five hours a day doing language learning. When I asked what that time looked like, she answered they mostly “catch up on life” in Swedish for about an hour, and then her tutor tries to use articles, or whatever she thinks of to try to teach new things, but often it is vocabulary. It is not done using pictures or books, but memorizing new words.

The government class would have provided a structured way to “fill language hours”, but they were at a loss to try to put together twenty hours of activities that seemed “in language” to them instead. Adam, an International Staff, after having a pleasant but very basic conversation (for Adam’s level) in Swedish commented to me that “getting to do language with Johannes is cool”. When I asked him what he could do to get more language hours, he said that he hoped to “get to see Colin, Erik, Edvard, Linas on a more consistent basis”, Swedes who were willing to speak with him in Swedish, but with who it was hard to find time to interact. Sometimes the American field workers ended up trying to speak only in Swedish with each other in order to fill up the language hours. This is a clear case where “authentic, host culture input” which is the foundation of sociocultural acquisition methods is lost due to the focus on hours.

Overall this focus on years and hours, as stated in Section 4.5.5 leads learners to spend more energy on “knocking off hours” then on exposing themselves to negotiated, contextually-rich, comprehensible input. To quote again one of the officials at the
regional office in Budapest: “there is a certain amount of hours written in the sky for how much each person has to put into language learning. The sooner you can knock those hours off the sooner you’ll be done because you have to spend those hours learning it”. This view of language learning as just a “matter of time”, with “putting in hours” being the goal, is counterproductive to proficiency. If learners understood that not every “language hour” is equal, they might be more motivated to seek out more input-rich pedagogical activities.

6.7 Beliefs about Immersion and Pre-field Acquisition

Two remaining factors which relate to these learner’s beliefs about attainment are immersion and pre-field acquisition. Learners’ perceptions of these two practices are influenced by the way that the GPA was explained to them at StepOut, and by the practicalities of their organization’s policies for MPD.

6.7.1 Immersion as a potential solution

Faced with proficiency which falls short of their expectations, my participants often asked me directly, or wondered indirectly about “immersion” situations, as a possible solution to their language proficiency woes. Anecdotes about other expats, whose organizations often do incorporate structured immersion into their language learning policies, are often the basis for these speculations. Immersion relates to pre-field language acquisition, because it is often suggested that immersion should happen before actual arrival to the field sites, where the temptations of “doing ministry” and the complicated team dynamics can detract learners from “doing language”.

1 but then you look at groups like the Mormons and they’re fluent
2 and you know they do not dress as cool
3 and they ride bicycles
4 but they are effective
Mark cites Mormons as a group whose proficiency is admirable. I interviewed two Mormon former field workers about the Mormon church’s highly-regarded immersion programs. At the beginning of their mission, they spend six weeks in an environment where they only speak the host language, living with host language speaking families, and seeing other expats only in structured interactional activities where a no-English policy is rigidly enforced. For the remainder of their first six months, they continue to take intensive language courses, although English-mediated interaction with expats is then permitted. By the end of their first six months (six weeks is an exaggeration), they are fluent enough to carry on an extensive conversation about philosophical and spiritual topics in the host language. Many Love the World workers are still unable to have these kinds of conversations after over a decade of living in the host culture.

Mormon missionaries do have several advantages however, all of which factor into the feasibility of immersion for Love the World workers. First the Latter-Day Saints organization pays all of the funds for Mormon missionaries, so they do not have to spend time on “ministry partner development”, and are not under pressure to directly report “results” right away to their supporters. Immersive settings can be costly, and Love the World workers would have to raise extra money to structure an immersion environment. Secondly, Mormon missionaries are single, whereas many Love the World field workers are at least married, and many have children. Since their family lives are English-mediated, and the organization wouldn’t support a separation of the families, enforcing six weeks of host-language mediated interaction would be difficult.
Nevertheless the Mormons are a similar enough population that Love the World workers compare themselves to them. Mormons are only in a place for two years. Most of my participants were Sprinters for two years without ever learning the language. Many Love the World field workers feel like it may not be worth it to invest so much energy into a language if they will only spend five years there, a time frame which is much longer than the Mormons’ two years. The Sprinters in Slovenia, who were struggling with the language, asked me about how the Mormons learned such good Slovene. When I explained, one exclaimed “I wish Love the World did that partly” or “I wish that [our preparation] was better” and several others chimed in, “Why do not we do that?” Other expats besides Mormons are used as an example of successful immersion, although they expressed doubts about doing it with a family (line 9).

1  E: I remember one of our friends who wanted to improve his Hungarian
2  he went out to a village
3  A: (that’d be good, yep)
4  E: and lived with a family for a while
5  and forced him to really
6  so anyway I know there’s
7  I: yeah I’ve done that before. It’s really helped a lot.
8  A: with a family yeah?
9  E: hmm it might be a little tricky
   (Eric and Amelia, Hungary, StepOut 2011)

Past experiences were also appealed to. Mark describes being on a short term trip to Kosovo, wandering between villages with a monolingual Albanian girl.

Then we’d go in these people’s houses and they spoke zero English, so it was like three days of non-stop Albanian and I remember feeling like I was picking up words like so fast like I was able to I could through pantomime and words like communicate with this girl let’s go to this house next, let’s go over here, let’s wait here, let’s pray, let’s do this. just in three days!, so I can imagine 6 weeks of intensive things like that you could pick up a lot! (Mark, Bosnia, field interview 2012)
Mark and his wife had also considered the feasibility of trying to do some sort of immersion at that stage in their language learning.

1 like we really wanted to over Thanksgiving break
2 not the whole break
3 but be able to go into [smaller city]
4 and stay with a family that did not speak English for a weekend
5 but it did not work out it
6 probably
7 I would like to try that again
8 ask [friend] where do they stay?
9 And try to stay somewhat immersed for the weekend or something
(Mark, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

Joshua describes how during his second year of Sprint, he was able to finally make use of language instruction because he had been immersed in a Hungarian-only environment with elderly neighbors in his apartment building, “after that second-year, that second-year when I did do tutoring or language school, after like living in that building, made a huge difference”. Erica, being sent to Slovenia, had completed a two-year Sprint in Macedonia, where she also learned the language well by immersion, being the only English-speaking field worker in the country. She felt frustrated by the group of nine American Sprinters then in Ljubljana who seemed to not be serious about learning the Slovene language, and were obviously unmotivated in the language class which she observed. In comparing her experience to the Sprinters in Slovenia, she explained.

1 and then I studied
2 well I did not really study
3 I learned Macedonian language in Macedonia for two years
4 and did not really do language classes that much.
5 but my second year there I was pretty much the only American
6 so I think that’s why I know the most of Macedonian of any language
7 because I was totally immersed
8 if I wanted to know what we’re doing in staff meetings I had to learn
(Erica, Slovenia, StepOut 2011)
Erica notices that Sprinters are placed in rather large teams, such as the team in Ljubljana, in the order of 8-12 people. The larger the team, the more self-contained the social world of the team can become. In such settings the readily available and natural opportunities for interaction within the team crowd out opportunities for social interaction with host nationals. Her acquisition of Macedonian (lines 6-7) is attributed to the fact that there were no American teammates or English speakers around (line 5, 7). This enabled her to “learn” rather than having to resort to “studying” Macedonian. The fact that interns and new field workers are increasingly being sent as part of teams rather than as singles or couples (Sweatman, personal interview at ICLL conference) makes it harder for field settings to be truly “immersive”. This contradicts the rationale given by most field workers for why they were not serious about pre-field learning- that it’s better to wait until they are immersed in the field. Yet once in the field, personal and observed experiences lead field workers to wish there were some kind of immersive experience, near the beginning of a Sprint internship, or built into the StepOut training.

I think it’s important to have some language even for short-termers to be effective language learning is better done by immersion (Laverne, Country Y, field visit 2010)

1 M: like something like that
2 like something that’s part of a StepOut training
3 that would have to be super intensive you would have to have like…
4 T: while you sleep like
5 M: you’d have to have the reel (of a tape recording)
6 playing in Spanish or whatever
7 while you’re sleeping
8 T: that’s a good idea maybe we should do that (Theresa, Bosnia, field interview 2012)

Before Mark could describe how immersion would work (line 3), his wife Theresa chimed in and jokingly suggested it could be absorbed in their sleep (line 4). Although
she was humorous, when confronted with the actual reality of what it would mean to live in a target-language speaking only environment, learners begin to feel more hesitant about immersion. For example, Mark and Theresa described a friend who went away for a while to be immersed in Serbo-Croatian, and began to consider the host nationals who had extended families they might stay with. When they began to discuss what it would have to look like with their small children, their initial enthusiasm for trying a village immersion weekend began to wane somewhat.

6.7.2 Pre-field immersion seen as unworkable

After discussing the Mormons’ immersion learning with the Slovenian Sprinters, they asked me “why do not we do that?” I did bring up the idea of immersion learning with Mary and with several others at the national and regional leadership levels. I relayed to the Sprinters a summary of those leaders’ views about immersion “their concept in leadership is that it would be emotionally too taxing”. The Sprinters immediately agreed, with Tom, a Sprinter returning for a second year saying “yes, Love the World is always worried about our emotions. they send us a team at the beginning of the year. It did take us to Spain to make sure that we’re encouraged, to try to encourage us at the end of the year… they’re constantly encouraging us. They maybe tried to do a little bit too much… they do not push us into the deep end”. Anthony, a former Sprinter to Slovakia who I interviewed also said that in his estimation, emotional health was what Love the World seemed to be most worried about, when in hindsight he wished he been better prepared for dealing with cross-cultural communication and language learning. Many leaders seemed hesitant when asked about immersion, mostly because they did not have a model about how that would work, and had fears that if the first week was spent just with host
nationals, trying to communicate in the host language, that they might feel discouragement.

What the first week actually looks like is quite the opposite to an immersion setting like that of the Mormons. Celine, describing her first year in Georgia, said that enough “America” is provided to make the “cost” of exposure to input feel high, to minimize the felt need [to learn the language]”. After reading an article in the GPA detailing the benefits of immersive learning for learners who rely solely on the GPA, Michael expresses doubts that that would work in Love the World. He and his wife Sara describe their first time in Italy as follows.

M: That’s true that that method (the GPA) is effective, but the problem with that is those learners -they are probably had their homes set up for them and everything was established for them. So it’s easy to go into the country and learn a full-time learning language if you are able to do that. But as an International Staff, you’ve got to go and get an apartment, figure out where the stores are, you figure how to survive. A lot of time is spent you know. You do not have the ability to…
S: Just it’s exhausting riding the city transports, it just gets really exhausting, so you do not want to work on language. Like by the end of the night you’re like “well let’s sit down and study the language for an hour” and hmm… like “this is not going to happen”
M: “let’s just skip that”
(Michael and Sara, Italy, StepOut 2011)

Their first weeks were so stressful that they spent almost no time learning Italian. By the time they turned their attention to language learning, they had learned how to survive in Italy relying on English, gestures, and the very limited set of Italian forms they had acquired in pre-field acquisition. They both admit that if they had come to the field knowing more Italian, the initial tasks would have been much less stressful, and become meaningful interactive encounters instead of daunting obstacles.

1 M: there are so many things to do to live in Rome
2 when we first got there that was
there wasn’t much of a chance to learn vocabulary and language
then I’m speaking to you about lack of language
S: we were trying to figure how to like live
M: live
S: for the first two months
I: if you had come to Italy with more proficiency would it have been easier?
S: yes
M: Sara...
S: that’s true [actually
M: [yes]
S: because we were [very much on our own
M: [yes!
S: and so I think if we could have been able to know some more
S: we would’ve had an easier time getting around
M: yeah the truth is
I think if we had been
I think, Sara, (conceding an earlier point that they were too stressed for
language learning on arrival)
yeah you are right about emotional health
and just getting by on a day-to-day basis
(offering counterargument) I think
if we
if Sara had learned more (before coming)
she wouldn’t have had as hard of emotional time with language
I do not see how she could have though
(Michael and Sara, field interview 2012)

They would have relished the chance to have been immersed somewhere in Italy
for a week somewhere speaking with just Italians, not worrying about setting up a home,
before officially moving to their field site. This would have given them confidence in
their ability to make themselves understood in Italy, acquire some useful phrases, and
develop the habit of speaking the target language wherever practical. In fact, the
diplomatic staff who I interviewed in Sarajevo said that the diplomatic corps are given
just such an opportunity. Near the end of an intensive language program in the United
States, learners are sent to their field site for a two-week structured immersion experience
in the target language, before being sent back to the US to finish their course and prepare
for the move. Of course, Love the World does not have the resources of the US State
Department, but in Section 9.3.5, I will suggest how pre-field acquisition, which learners are positively disposed to, and an immersive experience, in a way that might fit within the organizations structure.
7. **Influence from Different Scales of the Organization**

Blommaert (2010) argues that in an age of globalization, ideologies of language and language forms themselves circulate within different scales. Any particular linguistic utterance is simultaneously unique, and also just another iteration of and dependent for meaning on conventional and shared patterns of historical usage. In this respect, Blommaert’s work on the sociolinguistics of globalization overlaps with approaches to second language acquisition rooted in Vygotsky’s Cultural Historical Activity Theory (Roth & Lee 2007, Lantolf 2000, 2006) in paying attention to both micro and macro time scales. What Blommaert’s analysis adds is attention to geographical space, scales which may be nested within each other (Blommaert & Huang 2010). “In an age of globalization, language patterns must be understood as patterns that are organized on different, layered (i.e. vertical rather than horizontal) scale-levels” (Blommaert 2010:5).

Each field site is not only nested within different layers relevant to the host nationals (i.e. their neighborhood, their city, their province, their country, Europe), but also within different layers of the Love the World organization (city team, national office, regional office (Eastern Europe or Western Europe), and the global campus ministry division). There are language forms whose extent of circulation is associated with one of these scales- city accents, provincial dialects, national languages. Ideologies about learnerhood within the organization also tend to be associated with or originate in one of the different levels of organization- the city team, the national office, the regional headquarters, and the various divisions at the global headquarters. The views of
leadership at different scales are very consequential, as Lisa explains in her frustration about the lack of accountability and lack of actual time to focus on language learning.

L: you know you hear at StepOut that you’re supposed to have two years. It makes me wonder like, should the decision be a local thing or should it be a national like should there be some sort of accountability from beyond the local, or even accountability to local leaders, who then have accountability to higher up?
I: do you feel like the two years does not really fit into reality here?
L: oh yeah! Not at all. We get probably more than normal language learning, which was not much. I was going to say probably like anything organizationally, it depends a lot on the leadership. And their views and experiences of the leadership

(Lisa, Country Y, field interview, 2010)

Lisa expresses frustration with the current situation, where language learning enforcement is handled at the local level. She feels that leadership on the national scale should be more involved, or perhaps even the regional scale, “higher up”, needs to have power to equip and hold local leadership accountable.

Because different models of learnerhood can emerge from different scales, the result is that participants are exposed to competing models for learnerhood, which they struggle to integrate. For example, at StepOut on the global level of the organization, the model of learnerhood associated with Thomson’s Growing Participator Approach (GPA) was held out to be superior than, and in opposition to traditional classroom learning. Michael in some ways orients toward this model of learnerhood, expressing excitement about interactional learning “I’m excited about what I’ve read in the sheets and the articles they wanted us to read” and attempting it in the field in Italy. Yet he also draws on models of learnerhood which come from his personal experience and local beliefs in Italy which concentrate on academic learning. Michael uses metalinguistic terminology such as “passo imperfetto” and enjoys formal language classes. He also seeks out Rosetta Stone (1992), whose pedagogical methods are antithetical to the sociocultural approach.
of the GPA. Michael’s language learning behavior shows that while there are stable centres of ideology about language learnerhood, affiliated with different scales of circulation, an individual’s own sense can involve pluralism, or polycentricity, drawing resources from several different centres, even conceptions of learnerhood which are diametrically opposed. The choice of orientation can depend largely on the most recently encountered model or advice.

In this section I organize the themes of learnerhood presented in Chapter 6 according to the scales with which they are most strongly associated, as depicted in Table 7.1. “Global” refers to decisions made at the global headquarters, or in committees that oversee field workers of a certain type in all of the regions, for example the StepOut organizing committee, or those who oversee all Sprinters or all International Staff. Love the World has divided the world into many regions; the regional level refers to decisions made at the regional offices, and the national level refers to decisions made at each of the countries within the region, most of which have their own national director and national HR policies. Local level refers to decisions made based on interactions with Love the World teammates, other expats and host nationals within each field site. The personal level refers to decisions based on one’s own past experiences, without consulting others.
TABLE 7.1: Aspects of learnerhood associated with/originating in various scales

| Global Level (organization-wide) | - Be involved in ministry, yet focus on learning the ‘heart’ language  
|                                 | - Language learning is a priority for the first two years, but not strictly interpreted or enforced  
|                                 | - No pre-field acquisition, focus instead on MPD (reiterated at regional scale)  
|                                 | - Devolve as much as possible to the regional level  
|                                 | - Emotional health is paramount, vacations, retreats take away from language time  
|                                 | - Attainment is a function of time (reiterated at every scale)  
|                                 | - Immersion resisted  
|                                 | - Advised to try the GPA (StepOut)  
|                                 | - Reluctance about assessment, academic learning  
|                                 | - Motivation is the most important predictor of proficiency  
|                                 | - Personal learning style seen as an important predictor (reiterated at national level)  
| Regional level                  | - Skepticism toward the GPA  
|                                 | - Language policy, including assessment, devolved as much as possible to the national level  
|                                 | - English is the lingua franca  
|                                 | - Expats did not learn a language or learned a language back in the early 1990’s  
|                                 | - Immersion resisted  
| National level                  | - Most influential in terms of implementing policies, often little training, not even accomplished learners themselves  
|                                 | - Skepticism toward the GPA  
|                                 | - Recommendations for language learning influenced by earlier time with less English proficiency  
|                                 | - Focus on tutors and books  
|                                 | - Learners should learn together with cohort to emotionally support each other, irrespective of proficiency or aptitude  
|                                 | - Assessment using academic, pre-packaged tools  
| Local level (Field site)        | - “Language helper” and “iceberg” primary remnants of StepOut training  
|                                 | - Contact with other expats leads to a sense of Love the World’s “non-hard-coreness”  
|                                 | - Contact with other expats leads to preference for certain textbooks, tutors deemed to be effective, certain language schools  

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Contact with host nationals leads to focus on overt metalinguistic and often prescriptive knowledge of target language, the kind of knowledge host nationals themselves are most likely to have of their own language.
Contact with host nationals leads to insecurity about foreigners’ abilities to learn host language.
Contact with host nationals leads to insecurity about usefulness of learning host language.
Aptitude is relied on to explain differential attainment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Personal level</th>
<th>Personal convictions about learning style lead learners to not take certain advice.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Long history with academic language learning leads learners to try what they’ve always tried, even if judged ineffective.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Using well-marketed CALL applications (i.e. Rosetta Stone, Pimsleur).</td>
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7.1 THE ORGANIZATION AS A TRANSNATIONAL ACTOR

A primary concern of this dissertation is what role a transnational organization can play as an agent of socialization into second language learnerhood. While recognizing that many different actors have a stake in shaping language learners’ learnerhood, Love the World has a specific interest in their workers’ achieving authentic relationship building and a legitimate participatory role (Meadows 2010) in the host culture. Michel & Wortham (2009:28) state that, “Few have studied how specific organizational practices transform individuals over time (Bauer et al.1998), even though this type of transformation is at the heart of what it means to study socialization” (Van Maanen & Schein 1979). While little work has been done on transnational organizations’ power to shape second language acquisition behavior, a gap that this dissertation seeks to help fill, some insight can be gained from looking at how organizations socialize employees into other types of behavior.
Any organization, especially human services organizations, presume particular models of personhood (Hasenfeld 1992); those models can be naturalized (unavailable to the scrutiny of those which hold the beliefs) or iconic (discursive figures which are actively animate to motivate certain behavior). These assumptions about personhood constrain the models of second language learnerhood which circulate within the organization. If an organization’s model of personhood sees individuals as the locus of abstract knowledge and skills, the resulting learnerhood would include a focus on aptitude and personality-based “learning style”, assessments that measure an individual's written production, and a focus on choice. In such cases the goal of learning would be “fluency” in a code, a fully-developed, learner-internal second language grammar, capable of generating utterances which reflect a learner’s resident competence. Such a model of personhood would conflict with the sociocultural model’s reliance on distributed cognition.

If an organization’s model of personhood assumes distributed cognition, as in sociocultural theory and the GPA, then aptitude and personal “learning styles” matter little. Learning depends not on an individual's learning style, but rather on their depth of integration into the host culture, and specifically the time spent in the ZPD. If this model is to be consistently applied, individualized cognitive assessments of linguistic performance make no sense. In such a model, assessments should involve assisted oral performances with native speakers; Love the World would need to exercise more agency in holding learners, as novices, accountable to really engaging in assisted performance. In such cases, the goal of learning would be a truncated repertoire, linguistic skills which allow an individual to function independently at each field site while performing certain
tasks. This truncated repertoire would not be an individually possessed competence, a second language grammar, but rather a series of habits and culturally practiced performances. In this section, I will discuss how analyses of “models of personhood” have been carried out within other kinds of organizations. I then assess Love the World’s ability, as a transnational organization, to act as a unitary centre, one scalar “level” of ideologies about learnerhood.

7.1.1 Other studies on organizations’ role in socialization

Collins (2007) analyzes an American university department’s role in socializing its students to be Russian learners, a very specific kind of second language learnerhood. Although teachers desired for sociocultural knowledge about Russia and Russian to be constructed in a dialogue between teachers (masters) and students (apprentices), both the teacher’s and learners’ visions for Russian learnerhood were constrained by university-wide policies and practices which had a very large role in shaping learnerhood, particularly through practices of accountability and assessment. While the students in her study were certainly invested in their Russian program, their self-conception as Russian learners seems less core to their identity than the participants in my study, who have staked everything in their new identity in their host culture. Another difference with my study is the degree of control which the university had. The organization Love the World generally eschews assessment, and has a much more devolved culture of decision making, factors which could affect the role the organization plays in socializing learners. My participants also have on average been involved with Love the World all through college, and their entire professional lives. It serves as the main organizing framework for their social relationships, as well as their personal faith journeys. As a consequence, the
organization potentially can command more allegiance, or certainly more investment, than Collins’ learners felt toward their university.

Roberts (2010) deals with language socialization in the workplace, particularly how migrants have to be socialized both into the institution-specific work-related discourse genres, but also the larger language and cultural practices of the culture within which those genres are housed. She found that workers in a high-tech multilingual company who were migrants incurred a linguistic penalty (Roberts & Campbell 2006). The organization’s beliefs about language usage and what multilingualisms were valued were enforced through selection, feedback, and rewards. Using this same framework, Bremner (2012) did a longitudinal study of how one PR worker in Hong Kong was socialized into appropriate ways of writing for the PR discourse genre, adopting the “voice” of her organization. The organization carried out the socialization with feedback and exposure to models, changing the participant’s views of what it means to use language appropriately for PR writing. Roberts finding that not all multilingualisms are created equal” is certainly borne out in this dissertation. A key difference is that the “linguistic penalty” which my participants encounter seems not to originate in the organization, but rather the collective attitudes of the host nationals. Some of my participants wish the organization played a greater role in creating or enforcing language standards, providing more feedback.

Michel & Wortham’s (2010) book *Bullish on Uncertainty* also dealt with organizations’ role in socializing employees into ideology. Workers drawn from the same participant population were hired by two different investment banks, each with a very different culture of decision making and managing uncertainty. “Individual Bank”
operated using “identity-induced involvement”, wherein the employee “starts with his or her own concepts and molds the situation accordingly” (25). Their sense of “workerhood” revolved around their own resources and agency, and conformed to the ways that employees had been groomed to conceive of themselves in their previous education and popular conceptions about the financial industry.

“Organization Bank” took a radically different approach, which Michel & Wortham call OTHER-ORIENTATION. “Other orientation is direct involvement because abstract identities, scripts and models were cleared away and their cognition, emotion and motivation engaged situations more directly. Actions were not mediated by abstract resources imparted from outside the situation” (25) forcing employees to radically re-conceptualize their “workerhood”. In Organization Bank, employees were forced to make decisions purposely beyond their skills or resources, so that they would learn to network within the organization and take advantage of the organization’s distributed knowledge with cognitive demands spread across an organizational network, rather than relying on their own skills and hard work. Anxiety at Organization Bank was initially high, as workers faced tasks that were beyond their competence, and focused even more intensely on their own self-concept and the inadequacy of their own resources. In contrast to Individual Bank workers however, this anxiety went down after six months, as they learned to trust in the wealth of resources at their disposal within the organization, and less on their own performance. This process proved traumatic, but effective, and after several years, the populations in the two banks had conformed to their organizations way of conceptualizing uncertainty, risk, and decision-making. Michel & Wortham claim that in previous work (Ashford & Black 1996 and Lave & Wenger 1991) participants are
assumed to be eager to learn the new ways of being that help them succeed, and vigorous resistance to these ways is ignored.

While workers at “Individual Bank” basically retained their pre-existing sense of “bankerhood”, “Organizational Bank” was able to divest its staff of their pre-existing ideas, and successfully socialize them into a very different model of “workerhood”, one which controverted both clients and employee’s expectations, but turned out to be highly successful. Michel & Wortham also claim that this other-oriented strategy is only possible in an organization-centered system where others can compensate for the errors of particular individuals. For example, “Organization Bank” can fire or not promote an employee for not conforming to the model for socialization. Michel & Wortham explicitly state that “during one unexpected market shift… the bank had to fire many employees” (31).

7.1.2 Practical disunity at the global level

One of my primary research questions was to what extent are organizations and organizational cultures influential as agents of socialization in shaping the learnerhood of their personnel. Michel & Wortham (2009) found that the two different investment banks were highly successful in terms of shaping their workers approach toward their work, managing uncertainty specifically. Love the World appears to be far more devolved than Michel & Wortham’s case study banks. Despite the fact that global repositories of information, and strategies for dealing with a variety of situations, are made available to its field workers, few workers know about or take advantage of these resources. The ability of Love the World to influence my participants is also limited by the model of compensation and promotion. My participants raise their own financial support, so while
they are paid through Love the World they are not paid by Love the World, removing one means of accountability. Field workers’ funding comes from donors, who are identified and solicited for support via personal or church-based networks. As Michael, commented in an interview.

“[Love the World] has language plans and goals, but I’m not motivated by those. I have a need to learn language. They cannot fire you, we’re raising our own support. You cannot get fired, there is not anything they can do to you, is nothing anyone can do to hold you accountable. They can say something mean to you or bad about you, but they’re not going to do that”. (Michael, Italy, StepOut 2011).

Love the World is constrained from playing as key a role in socialization as Michel & Wortham’s Organization Bank not only by the financial model, but also by the fact that, as an explicitly Christian organization, Love the World is “not going to say something mean”, something which the managers and clients in Organization Bank or Roberts’ (2010) workplaces felt fewer qualms about.

Mary, advocating within Love the World for an approach to second language learnerhood which she had been socialized into through her connections to MTI and the descendants of the Toronto Institute of Linguistics, undoubtedly hoped for an outcome similar to Organization Bank. Love the World field workers have a model of learnerhood largely conforming to and shaped by the academic models taught at public universities, similar to the “workerhoods” which Individual Bank employees brought to their new job, shaped by the models valued and taught at their university business schools. They are more like Individual Bankers, in that these models, which conform to both the workers’ and host nationals’ own expectations, are retained, despite being shown to be less
effective than workers in other organizations, who are seen as being “too hard core” but more effective at fostering host language proficiency.

Several key differences between Organization Bank and Love the World seem to prevent the kind of drastic resocialization that Organization Bank employees underwent. First, Organizational Bank had consensus among those responsible for shaping the organizational policy. As Mary is the only person with formal education in SLA, she finds herself at odds with other individuals in the organization in terms of how to best support and prepare workers for language acquisition.

Secondly, Organizational Bank had significantly more leverage over its employees than Love the World does, as Love the World field workers raise their own financial support. As Michael asked, “what are they going to do (if we do not succeed), fire us? We raise our own support”. Because faith-based missions and development organizations have a very different financial model, and remuneration is up to the individuals’ own initiative in gathering support, rather than the organization’s profits, there is a very different model of accountability and assessment. “Firing” field workers would mean that less money is flowing through the organization, and fewer areas are “being reached”.

Thirdly, Organization Bank was willing to push its workers until they hit a breaking point, a cathartic moment, when they realized their old model of workerhood was insufficient for the demands of the job, and they had no choice but to adopt the new model. These Organization Bank workers also had the entire resources of the Bank at their disposal when they hit this breaking point, to provide them a new model of “bankerhood”. Because of Love the World’s primary concern for emotional health, the
organization avoids intentionally putting its workers in a position that would break them,
that would force them into adopting a new model or else leave the field. This explains
their resistance to mandating or even encouraging immersion situations. Because of host
nationals’ willingness to use English, the social and professional demands of a English-
speaking teammates, and contact with American friends via social media, the cathartic
moment wherein learners decide once and for to drastically change in order to learn the
host language may be long delayed. Participants reported teammates who had been the
field for five, ten, even fifteen years, without every really acquiring more than a basic
transactional proficiency, and had managed to eke out an existence in the host country
where host language use was not necessary, by relying on translators, investing in
English speakers, and living in an “expat bubble”.

Although some kind of ultimate, cathartic, breaking point may be long delayed,
many smaller breaking points do come for Love the World field workers, usually when
their language proficiency is insufficient to accomplish a given task, and relying on host
workers to accomplish it is either impossible or impractical. In such situations, unlike in
Organization Bank, the resources of the entire organization are not readily at their
disposal. While Organization Bank was waiting with a new model of “bankerhood” to
hand its workers, field workers find no ready-made model of “learnerhood” from Love
the World to help them deal with these crises. Love the World’s concern for workers’
emotional health, for avoiding “sink or swim” situations ironically sets them up to
experience many smaller frustrating breaking points, without a major catharsis. The most
natural way to avoid such discomfort is to also avoid situations that would push them
beyond the reach of their competence or even of assisted performance. For a field worker
this would mean more time with American teammates, and seeking out more proficient English-speaking host nationals.

Among global policy makers in Love the World, there is a lack of agreement about learnerhood, with Mary advocating for positions sometimes not shared by those who have more direct control over language and language acquisition policy. However, as StepOut is the main site where individual field workers encounter organization-wide ideologies; her influence is the primary one associated with the global level. From the global office comes the larger idea that language learning is supposed to be the priority for the first two years, but that this shouldn’t be done at the exclusion of ministry, and not so rigidly enforced that learners feel isolation from teammates while “doing language”. From this scale also originates the idea that language acquisition cannot be effectively done before arrival that it is best to wait until arriving at the field. This is partly so that field workers can focus on support raising (MPD), which is crucial, and also so learners can be “immersed”. In practice, however, these workers are anything but immersed in the target language upon arrival. The imagined processes and outcomes which emerge at the global levels of leadership diverge from local realities partly because decision makers at the global and national levels may not have circulated through the different nodes themselves, having never served as long term International Staff.

The perceived focus on caring for emotional health, with the goal of improving retention and reducing attrition is a global scale decision as well. This “care” leads to a desire to not be too “hard core”, or to practice assessment and accountability in ways which would discourage learners. It is conceivable that this approach slows down progress in acquisition however, leading to an increase in attrition due to discouragement
rooted in but not directly blamed on, a lack of language progress. Since each region is seen as having different cultural and linguistic challenges (indeed some regions are largely English speaking), specific policy decisions are devolved to the regional headquarters. The view that language learning should be measured and developed in proportion to hours and years permeates discourse throughout the entire organization, but is reinforced in the GPA’s own formulation.

Other factors linked to the global level of the organization relate to the GPA and Mary’s own approach to second language learnerhood. Through her personal and professional experiences, and connections to the missionary language learning assemblage diagramed in Figure 4.3, Mary has come to be influenced by sociocultural approaches to SLA and by Krashenesque strong-analogy models. As a result, motivation is seen as the most important factor in predicting attainment, but appeals to personal learning style are also made as part of StepOut training, not only in the language learning module but other modules as well. Sociocultural and Krashenesque theories both downplay “academic learning”, learning which incorporates explicit instruction, external representation of metalinguistic knowledge, and conscious and deductive cognition. As a result the construct of language aptitude is also seen as irrelevant, and assessments are thought to be built into the exercises, so no overt assessment is required. Ongoing assessment is indeed built into the GPA and other methodologies such as PILAT, but not into the tasks that many of these learners rely on or invent in the field.

7.1.3 Ideological disunity at the global level

It is not just policy concerns or practical considerations which lead to disunity at the organizational level, and prevent Love the World from functioning like
Organizational Bank. Although Love the World is a transnational organization, those responsible for global policy and direction, and particularly for HR policy and the development of StepOut, are disproportionately American. While the “global headquarters” of the organization exists in physical space, relevant decision making about language learning is geographically dispersed among individuals who live in many sites in the US and around the world. Although the global players are not a locality per se, larger ideologies get in a sense “localized” into the community of actors who is responsible for setting policy at the global level of the organization. The organization faces a series of generative contradictions generated from ideologies of personhood rooted in the American educational system and the evangelical worldview. These widely-circulating ideologies are localized in specific ways into Love the World’s leadership, but they also circulate and are transformed by processes of localization at the regional, national and local scales of the organization.

The first ideology which Love the World must contend with is the naturalized belief in one language, one people, one nation, which seems borne out in the educational history of the United States as well as in political discourse (Citrin et al 1990, Wiley & Lukes 1996). Due to this ideology, historically learning a second language is the optional privilege of a white, educated elite (Ovango 2003). The persistence of this explains the overwhelming focus of SLA research on educated learners learning in academic settings, and adult learners who are learning after the critical period in contexts devoid of natural target language interaction. Love the World’s language policies are overshadowed then by an educational past which suppresses multilingualism and promotes English, and sees
language learning as an optional adult activity strongly associated with classrooms and schools.

Love the World also must contend with evangelical ideologies of language. The two ideologies overlap in their shared belief in a one language-one people mapping (reflected in the approach taken by SIL). Yet crucially evangelicals extend this ideology not to the political entity of the nation state, but to the “heart language”, linking the authentic inner world of a self to that language and people group. Sociocultural methods more closely align with evangelical ideologies in their belief that a culture “owns” a language, that its worldview and treasures are distributed throughout the language practices of the communal language. But by forcing the sociocultural method to fit within a preconceived notion of discrete languages, rather than mixed linguistic repertoires, the evangelical ideology and sociocultural methodology espoused by them cannot accurately map onto the complex social distribution of codes found in urban and cosmopolitan European locales. My Love the World field workers, even when choosing a language helper, continue to aim at the national standard variety associated with academia, rather than aiming to learn “slang” or the kinds of informal, non-literary speech which Greg Thomson seems to have in mind for GPA users. The presence of these two generative ideologies, which are largely shared by the American field workers educated in America, overshadow and filter the models of learnerhood associated with more local scales in the organization.

7.2 REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS

Regional headquarters have more control over shaping language policies than the global headquarters. At least in the Eastern European region in Budapest, English is the
overwhelming lingua franca. The expatriate field workers for the most part either do not speak a language other than English, or learned a different language in the field in the early 1990’s before being promoted to a role at the regional level. Even the field workers who are from Eastern Europe are mostly excellent English speakers; early Love the World projects in the 1990s tended to seek out and attract those students who were interested in or already spoke proficient English. These students became national and regional leaders. Both American and Eastern European field workers downplay learning Hungarian, as their “ministry can be done in English” and many live in the “expat bubble” of Budapest’s western suburbs. This does not model commitment to host language proficiency. Indeed some regional staff has either little experience developing fluency. For those who did serve in the field and have experience with language learning, this experience predates the GPA’s arrival onto the scene of field-based language learning.

Regional leaders I spoke with knew very little of the GPA and tended to be skeptical of it (even though one of Greg Thomson’s main training sites for the GPA is there in Budapest). They showed more familiarity with LAMP, as it was popular in the 1990s when many of their own learnerhoods were being shaped. Although the GPA is widely regarded as an improvement over the disfavored LAMP method, the regional leaders differentiate between the two in terms of personal learning style. The field worker in Budapest most directly responsible for language acquisition and policy felt “our (Love the World’s) approach tends to be one size fits all” and should take personal learning style more into account. He eagerly showed me the following report from the East Asia region as an example of how his personal beliefs that learning style should be a primary
consideration in language learning policy was implemented in a way that attempted to accommodate sociocultural methodologies.

Those who had tested as “N” (iNtuitive) on the Myers-Briggs personality test almost always found L.A.M.P. to be more helpful, while those who had tested as “S” (Sensor) on the Myers-Briggs test were drawn to Greg Thomson (by which he means the GPA).

After seeing this pattern, we began to ask expats seeking tutors if they knew their Myers-Briggs type, and to train the tutors we matched them with accordingly—L.A.M.P. for those who had tested as “N’s” and Greg Thomson for “S’s”. In addition, we used other learning style surveys to assess what would be helpful for tutors to use during their time, or as appropriate homework assignments. (Letter on language policy from East Asia region)

The “one size fits all” view does not seem to be borne out by my observations of learners in the various field sites. Although it is true that in some sites all of the Sprinters are taking the same language class, regardless of proficiency or learning style, I found that International Staff were far from being uniform. Recall from Section 6.2 most employed a bewildering variety of techniques, some almost completely ad hoc, others almost completely pre-prepared (i.e. Swedish government programs, or Rosetta Stone). The regional personnel I spoke with also tended to be skeptical of the workability of immersion opportunities, due to concerns about logistics and emotional well-being. Regional leaders devolve most of the responsibility for language policy and all of the responsibility for assessment and accountability to the national leaders.

7.3 National offices

Across Europe, most national offices are run by host nationals. As of spring 2012 however, the only nations where my participants were stationed which had host national leaders were Italy, Hungary and Germany. In the other countries, Americans, mostly those who had come to Europe in the early 1990s, were acting as the national directors.
Many of the national staff, in positions such as HR and planning, are also Americans. Americans recruited to these positions because of their administrative skills may have very limited proficiency in the host language. American directors at the national scale tend to have served for a long time, and to have acquired the language to a sufficient degree, but they often employed the highly academic methods used in language schools in Eastern Europe in the early 1990’s, and thus are conflicted in what to recommend.

Effectively language policy is devolved to the point where it resides at the national level, often administered by an HR official, or handed over to a field worker who was particularly successful at language learning. Most national leaders, like the regional leaders, had only a vague awareness of the GPA, and were unable to speak accurately to its pros and cons, and therefore did not advocate for it, except in situations where it “fit someone’s learning style”. However in countries with more than one field site, often the main language learning decisions are devolved one step further, down to the city level. At the national level I noticed a tendency to support learners who arrived together to participate in language learning together. This was both to reduce the financial costs of hiring a teacher or tutor, as well as to build camaraderie among the learners in the same cohort. National leaders responsible for implementing accountability and assessment were often reluctant to fully implement these responsibilities. When assessment was brought to bear, methods familiar to locals, such as university-entry language proficiency tests were used.

7.4 Local models of learnerhood from other field workers

In Michel & Wortham’s (2010) study of socialization within an organization, the investment banks they studied had a well-organized structure, with an ability to hire and
fire personnel at will, and to dictate responsibilities. Workers of other organizations perceive Love the World as being very methodical, with a strictly-enforced approach and strong policies. This perception may hold true in other realms of equipping field workers - such as theology, leader development, financial management models, and even missiology. Yet Love the World is surprisingly “loose” when it comes to language learning, acting in a far less unitary manner. Rather than conceiving of Love the World as a strongly hierarchical organization, wherein each level has strict control over the lower levels, Ong and Collier’s (2006) notion of an assemblage of nodes, connected to each other by bi-directional communication flows, seems to be more accurate. Certain influential local leaders, via personal relationships, have outsized influence on national or global policy, particularly regarding StepOut design. In the absence of willingness or ability to implement and enforce consistent language policy across the organization, the creators of StepOut must manage conflicting demands, and models of learnerhood originating in the local level fill in the gaps.

At the local level, most field workers received training at StepOut in the time period since 2006, when the GPA began to be taught. Thus learners at this level had some concept of what the GPA means. However, most learners were still unable to accurately describe the tenets of the methodology, probably due to the limited time they had to learn it at StepOut, the “intimidating” size of the GPA training book and the stark contrast between the GPA’s and Eastern European academic models of learnerhood. Learners were also reluctant to take better advantage of language coaches guide them through the process of using the GPA. The concepts of “pictures with a language helper” and “iceberg principle” were all that primarily remained of the StepOut training.
I: Do you feel like anything taught at StepOut now was useful to you? Out of the language stuff?
M: It did not help me that much. It helps Theresa more. I did utilize a lot of it. Oh I forgot so in that fall I was doing three hours with Sondra and two or three hours a week with George also a helper. Now I remember what we did. We took a whole book of pictures and we went through every vocabulary word for all of them we did the man in the picture pointing telling stories about it. We read the newspaper together. We did a lot. So I know with George, at least three hours a week as a helper, so that was good.
(Mark, Bosnia, field interview 2012)

This response was fairly typical; their memories of StepOut focused on vocabulary learning and the use of pictures. Many learners felt that such methods were more suited to visual learners, and not "good" language learners.

At the local level field workers build strong connections with field workers from other organizations at such sites as international churches, restaurants and bars which cater to expats, and other internet communities. When comparing themselves to secular businessmen in their same cities, Love the World field workers rate their own desire to learn the host language positively, reporting that businessmen and even some diplomats did not seem to make language learning a priority. When comparing themselves to other missions and development organizations though, most of my participants commented on how other organizations were much more strict, or “hard core” about language learning.

In the following extract, Jack and Carter discuss another organization that has many field workers in their same city.

1 C: they have like it’s like set down in mandate
2 I think to us it sounds
3 really kinda dumb
4 like how strict their guidelines are
5 they have mandated like first 30 hours a week you know
6 J: yes they have it all set out for you
7 they give you your language teacher umm
8 and then they set out for you- you need to err
this many hours with your teacher
then you need to have a language partner
then there’s a language coordinator for the region
and they work up this **whole curriculum** for you
then they have your language teacher
for your team
they make up **assessment** tests
and they give them to the whole team like periodically
there’s already **standards** for that
they just give you the **standard** test
to show that you’re at level 3 or level 4
and when you get to level 3, say
I know there’s a level like after two years
you even have to get to level 3 then **you have it back finally**
you have your own language
C: oh Wow!
J: like it’s never
that’s the thing!
it’s never just like
like showing the community
it’s never just showing people that you’re progressing
it’s like
C: you have to give?
J: making this
**checking off these reports**
that would be terrible
C: see I might like that

Jack and Carter both agreed that other organizations in their city were more “hard core”, but they negatively evaluate this characteristic of the other organizations (lines 4, 35). “Hardcoreness” is indexed both by the phrases which I bolded in the above transcript, but is also narratively performed. In lines 7-22, Jack performs the repetitiveness and helplessness of learning in such organizations via a series of underlined phrases where the “mandating” organization (lines 2,6) is the agentive “they” and the language learner is positioned as a patientive “you”. The helplessness and lack of agency for learners in
hardcore organizations is realized explicitly in line 23 with the phrase “you have it back finally”. Serbo-Croatian in this case is a possessed object (“you have your own language” (line 24)) which gets “taken from” the learner; they get it back only upon reaching intermediate proficiency.

“Hardcoreness” is not in opposition to the sociocultural methodologies, as the “levels” in lines 20-23 are related to Phase 3 and Phase 4 of the GPA methodology; these other organizations do indeed use the GPA as one part of their language learning (line 11). “Hardcoreness” seems to refer primarily to structure (5-13), standards (lines 18-19), assessment (16-17, 19), and accountability to regional leaders (12). Rather than just “showing people you are progressing” (line 30), there are real consequences to slow language progress. Other organizations, such as the CMA, see language learning as being structured, with particular and testable milestones. At the end of this extract, Jack, who thinks language learning is “showing the community (of host nationals)”, thinks that this orientation towards organizational accountability and reaching milestones “would be terrible” (line 35). Carter however counters with “see I might like that” (line 36).

This interaction is an example of how learnerhood is shaped and contested in interaction with teammates. Jack as International Staff has a direct mentoring role over Carter, a Sprinter. Jack is also a much better Serbo-Croatian speaker. Carter expresses a view he offers as representative of his team “to us it sounds really dumb”. He seems to have absorbed an opinion that other organizations are “too hard core” from his senior teammates without knowing the details of their learning, aligning with Jack in lines 25 and 32. As Jack describes the details of this language learning policy, perhaps in light of his own frustratingly slow progress in Serbo-Croatian, Carter recognizes that some of his
own difficulties stem from a lack of accountability. In this case Carter has to decide whether he will align his learnerhood with Jack, or create open up his own learnerhood to include the “mandates” and “standards” that other organizations have incorporated. In a later interview with Carter, he shared with me that he did desire to return long term, and that he hoped to pursue a more regimented policy in the future, as he “didn’t take language learning seriously enough”.

Contact with other expats at the local level, such as those who work in these other “hard core” organizations, leads learners to prefer certain textbooks, tutors deemed to be effective, and certain language schools. These resources recommended by other learners at their field sites, full of pictures and labeled clearly in the host language, seem a more attractive resource than the thick, black-and-white GPA binder, which is written all in English. Mark and Theresa did not have access to the GPA when they first arrived, and later commented though that they wish they had known how to use it when they arrived. In their minds, the GPA was just for beginners, and they did not use it as intermediate learners. What they did do when they arrived was turn to other learners in other organizations for advice.

1  T: yeah so all I knew is that I need to find tutor
2     I need to do 40 hours a week
3     but my tutor couldn’t meet 40 hours a week obviously
4     and so it’s like
5  what do I do
6  what do I do
7  so I was interviewing every missionary I possibly could
8  that had been there longer than a year and was doing language
9  M: I borrowed my friend from the CMA
10     I borrowed her notebook
11     and just read the whole thing
12     that book on language
13     and that’s all I was able to take
14     yeah last year we pretty much just made up what we did
based off the kind of hodgepodge
and the good thing about our training
that says “this is our...
this is the philosophy we’re promoting
you can take elements you want or you can take it all”
the helpful things that is everyone has their opinion
everyone has their opinion
and one person will say you should just go memorize Scriptures
and another person’ll say “well when I was learning language
{in Southern accent- breakthrough into performance}
when I {drowled} was learning language
{laughing} my teacher just made me read the Bible... out loud
I did not know what it said just that I had to read it… four hours”
everyone has their pet strategy or opinion
and when you have no philosophy philosophical base
everything kind of goes
maybe I should do more memorizing?
maybe I should just read out loud
maybe I should just
and you don’t you
end up using
every other week I’d have a different strategy
(Mark and Theresa, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

Both Theresa and Mark enact their cluelessness in this extract. In lines 2-6, Theresa enacts urgency through repetition of “40 hours a week” and “what do I do”. Mark also uses repetition to enact his cluelessness (lines 30-31). They describe their helplessness and susceptibility to bad advice, in the face of this urgency yet ignorance about language learning. He negatively evaluates their “made up” (line 14) and “hodgepodge” (line 15) strategy, cobbled out of other people’s bad advice. Reading a friend’s notes (lines 11-12) was exasperating and the suggestions of using Scripture memory (line 22) or Bible reading (line 25) are presented using an exaggerating Southern accent (lines 23-26). This accent indexicalizes ignorance and Christian fundamentalism where the Bible is the sole authority for everything, including second language input. Looking back Mark
and Theresa see that their “hodgepodge” method was not particularly effective, and these narrative features are used to take a critical stance towards the advice that was offered them, advice which did not come from any trained workers from Love the World.

1 it’s hard because we are the first ones to really do language
2 so it takes some front runners to come up
3 how do you find the good language learner?
4 you have no idea.
5 I mean we found [our tutor]
6 through another person who goes to our church
7 from another organization.
8 so that was fortunate for us.
9 I mean I did not know what
10 what a good language teacher was like
(Mark, Bosnia, Skype interview 2012)

Reflecting on the same time period, Mark explains this time of using an ineffective “hodgepodge” as resulting from the fact that they are “front runners” or “pioneers” for Love the World in that field site. In this extract Mark alludes to the fact that Love the World staff did not advise them about language learning in that specific context. They were not the first field workers to “do language” (line 1), as many other expats had lived in that same city, but they were the first Love the World field workers. The implication is that since Love the World believes that language learning policy should be devolved to the most local level possible, national or regional leaders felt unable or were unwilling to give language learning advice to a learner in a different locality. Although field workers in Croatia and Serbia had learned the same language, none of that knowledge was available to Mark in Bosnia; language learning is a “local thing” within Love the World. Rather than turn to experienced or competent actors at other nodes within
Love the World, they were left to look for good language learners (line 3), which were often incompetent (see previous extract) in other organizations (line 7).

### 7.5 Local models of learnerhood from host nationals

Field workers move into local field sites, each of which have their own history of contested language ideology. Many field sites have seen drastic changes in the linguistic landscape and soundscape as various political regimes imposed their own language ideologies which to a greater or lesser extent sought to codify and impose certain ways of speaking. Bosnia for example transitioned from Ottoman multilingualism, to Austro-Hungarian German dominance, to Tito’s attempts to unify a Yugoslavian language to modern attempts to groom Bosnian away from Croatian and Serbian as an ideological construct (Tollefson 2002). Against the backdrop of nationalist enterprises in the political and educational spheres, host nationals’ model of learnerhood, about what it means to be a learner of *their* language may differ substantially from and be an agent of socialization for field workers’ own learnerhood.

Instruction in a national “standard variety” of a mother tongue, in contrast to non-standard local varieties, was seen as key to citizenship (Milroy & Milroy 1985, Balibar 1991). In the colonial era through the mid-twentieth century, second language learning was aimed at an educated transnational elite, and thus textbooks were built around translation in and out of an idealized national standard language of power. Sociocultural methods leave the question of target variety wide open, and indeed the GPA explicitly assumes that learners will aim at a register of everyday conversation, perhaps in a non-literate variety, rather than at an elite literary standard variety. Host nationals in Eastern
Europe learn languages against the backdrop of these historical commitments and forces, which may explain some of the reported resistance to sociocultural methods.

7.5.1 Local beliefs about the preferred method of host language acquisition

Contact with host nationals at the local level leads to a focus on overt metalinguistic and often prescriptive knowledge of target language, the kind of knowledge host nationals themselves are most likely to have of their own language. Local ideologies of language acquisition often recalled contrastive analysis and grammar-translation approaches (see Prator & Celce-Mercia 1979:3 for a detailed description) used in schools throughout Europe in the 1960’s and in Eastern Europe up through the transition out of communism. Such approaches contradict almost totally the GPA and other sociocultural methods and have roots in the processes of language standardization.

These approaches were cited when host nationals explained their own experiences with learning English, which formed their own view of language acquisition. Leonardo in Italy commented that English is so difficult because one had to memorize tense forms and charts. Rahman in Bosnia said that in his high school he did not speak a word of English for two years, even though seven of his participants in high school were in English. Love the World field workers ran up against this strong grammar-translation approach in the following extracts, where learners at StepOut described the instruction that they had pursued up to that point. Their descriptions refer to external representations of metalinguistic knowledge, rather than on communicative opportunities.

1 M: you know that [our tutor’s] not a trained language teacher
2 she’s someone who can speak two languages
3 and someone taught her a few things
4 I: and the knowledge about the first language
5 the kind they teach you if you go to the university
6 is very different from knowledge in the second language
7 M: yeah!
8 so [our new tutor’s] really good about that.
9 also [our old tutor] taught too much at first.
10 I mean I had a chart with every grammatical ending in it the first week
11 and so I memorize the chart
12 that does not mean I can use them
13 but I knew where the things (suffixes in the paradigm) were
   (Mark, Bosnia, field interview, 2012)

In this case what made the new tutor good is that she is not a trained language teacher
(Lines 1-3). Mark agreed emphatically (line 7) with my suggestion that the new tutor may
lack the kind of knowledge of Serbo-Croatian taught to Bosnian native speaking teachers
at university. Based on my observations and Mark’s statements, “language training” in
his local context seems to lead to a preference for charts and lists (lines 10-13), hallmarks
of pedagogy rooted in grammar drilling and contrastive analysis. Anelisa agrees in her
description of her trained tutor.

   1 It was like
   2 All lists
   3 Umm
   4 Lots of like pictures with lists of words
   5 And a picture
   6 Lots of conjugation lists you know
      (Anelisa, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

Picture use (lines 4-5) is a feature of the GPA, but in this case pictures are not used to
generate negotiated input, but rather are tied in one-to-one pairings with a list of
vocabulary items in their dictionary form. (1-4). Morphosyntactic information (line 6) is
presented separately and decontextualized, reinforcing the morphosyntax/lexicon
dichotomy which is characteristic of many of these field workers, and which was
described in Section 5.4.5.

   1 I practice grammar from class with a language helper
   2 I completely lead the time
   3 sometimes it goes well
sometimes it does not
most language partners do not like to do things repetitively
which is the one thing I need
if I do it once they move on to something else
it takes a LOT of urging
(Donna, Italy, Field observations 2012)

In this extract, Donna’s tutor is presented as teaching about Italian, not creating interaction in Italian. The tutor feels that a single presentation of a fact about grammar should suffice for acquisition (Line 7), whereas Donna wants automatization (Line 6, see DeKeyser 2007) to make the external fact into an internalized routine. Also in Italy, Sara’s tutor used a four-skills book. Sara did not necessarily prefer to use a textbook, but her tutor “a student girl, kept taking back control” and was “not willing to be a language helper” in the fashion of the GPA. The book she used was pedagogically well-designed (“Un giorno in Italia”, by Chiappini & DeFilippo) but definitely not in line with her stated preference for sociocultural methodology. She also had to read a very complex book of poetry written by and for native speaking Italians.

In Slovenia the lesson I observed with the Sprinters was structured entirely around case, and the teacher was teaching accusative which she called “4th case” THEN instrumental or “6th case”. This conscious deductive learning of case (as opposed to subconscious inductive learning) was also observed in a Sprint class in Bosnia. The Slovak learners used a book structured around memorizing formulaic dialogues (six per chapter) after two chapters containing a large amount of alphabet and pronunciation drills. Each chapter contained 5 pages of overt grammar instruction, and 30-40 new words presented in isolation, in base form, with one-to-one English translations. Even though the book was very modern in terms of graphic design and publication date, the methodology was adapted straight from behaviorist grammar-translation approaches,
approaches which were still being employed in Lithuanian universities at least, when I lived there in the years 2003-2006. Even at the StepOut demonstrations of the GPA, the German woman contracted to demonstrate the method to Kristin and Erica seemed very skeptical, and chose to use a more overtly metalinguistic methodology. This left Kristin and Erica doubtful, upon arrival in Slovenia, that any Slovene tutor would be willing to use the GPA.

Many of the field workers in Bosnia used a single tutor, hailed as being extremely effective. This tutor rarely resorted to contrastive analysis, and did provide an array of opportunities for interaction and output stemming from authentic exigence (communicative need). Yet even she presented the grammar of the Serbo-Croatian language in a metalinguistic format, using paradigm charts, drills, and sentence generation exercises. Low frequency quasi-exceptional declensions such as the masculine -tak/-dak declension illustrated in Figure 7.1, were presented with as many tokens in the grammar homework as high frequency ones.

![Figure 7.1: Masculine nouns of the -tak/-dak declension, declined by Mark.](image-url)
She also assigned her students essays, which she corrected for accuracy (in red pen) in the traditional manner, as illustrated by this essay produced by Carter.

Figure 7.2: Carter’s essay corrected for formal accuracy

A large portion of the lesson was devoted to oral reading and self-correction of the largely morphological inaccuracies, which were numerous in this morphologically complex language. Although the tutor was positioned as being very effective and modern by her students, and indeed she departed in several key respects from canonical grammar-translation methodology, her focus on naming cases, paradigms, declensions and conjugations directly contradicts the model of acquisition presented at StepOut.

7.5.2 Local beliefs about the value of host language acquisition

Field workers are confronted with these strongly academic and metalinguistic approaches to language acquisition through contact with host nationals, both trained tutors and others who used these methods in their own school learning. Host nationals also pass on to field workers their own doubts about English-speaking foreigners’
abilities to ever learn the host language. Foreigners whose L1 was neighboring or related European languages were generally seen to have an advantage, and thus it was more realistic to expect them to learn the host language than to expect an English-speaker to do so.

One of the graduates of the PILAT language course I observed, who I interviewed again in the field in Slovakia, said “Slovaks all say ‘it’s so hard you’ll never learn it—that’s very discouraging ‘it’s an impossible language.’” Several field workers in Bosnia concurred, “people do not have confidence that we actually can use the language”. Jim in Hungary reported that “I’ve heard many people say that ‘You’re used to hearing English spoken to a lot of different ways,’ they say, ‘I cannot imagine, I just cannot even conceive of what it would be like to hear someone speak Hungarian but not be able to [speak it fluently].’” Jim, whose job at the regional headquarters is “all in English” has lower fluency than his wife Tara. Tara positioned Jim as a typical expat even noting how his Hungarian is limited: “all he has is the stuff he picks up just by going about the few things he does”. Although this could be a threat to the trope that success as a field worker means success in language learning (Jim does indeed feel internal pressure and desire to learn Russian, which he deems more useful for his job), Tara explains Jim’s lack of Hungarian in this way:

1 they’re like
2 of course they tell him
3 “if I wasn’t Hungarian
4 I wouldn’t’ve learned Hungarian”
5 because they know it’s hard
6 and it has only 12 million speakers globally
(Tara, Hungary, field interview, 2012)
In this entextualized excerpt, Tara’s voicing of the Hungarians, the “they” (lines 1, 2, 5) is twice removed, being based on Jim’s reports of what Hungarian’s told him. The Hungarians themselves, reduced into a singular first-person speaker “I”, are ventriloquated as expressing the worthlessness of their language in the linguistic marketplace (Bourdieu 1991:37) (line 6), and its difficulty for outsiders to learn (line 5). This view contradicts the reported pride of Hungarians in their language in sociolinguistic studies of Slovakia (Daftary & Gal 2000, Kontra 1999) or Romania (Baár & Ritivoi 2006). One possibility is that Hungarians feel differently about their language when confronted with English contact than they do with Romanian or Slovak contact. A more likely explanation, from conversations with field workers from other organizations who have served in Hungary longer, is that the Hungarians are trying to be polite to someone they see as a foreigner, an outside guest who has no stake per se in the national and ethnic project of Hungary. This becomes self-reinforcing; Hungarians see the field worker as a transitory speaker of a high status language, so they choose English. This in turn cuts the field worker off from input and interaction, impeding Hungarian acquisition. This makes the field worker seem even more like an outsider, and Hungarians are even more likely to speak English. A field worker would have to be very persistent and confident, continuing to “foist” conversations in very partial Hungarian onto listeners in order to break this cycle and communicate that they do want a stake in the Hungarian national project.

Especially with less-commonly learned second languages like Slovene, Slovak and Hungarian, which are very different from English, host nationals may not have many models of Americans who have learned the language successfully. Host nationals may thus calculate that it is not possible for these foreigners to learn the language, or at least
to a level that would surpass their own substantial English fluency. Rahman, a Bosnian student observed that Americans have to force locals to speak in Serbo-Croatian with Americans, even Americans who are judged to be fairly proficient in the host language: “Bosnians really want to talk in English, even though Mark and Jack speak some of the Bosnian so they try to force conversation in Bosnian. “ This code-choice dynamic further discourages local American Love field workers about the value of acquiring this host language.

Also, when host nationals, hear their language used non-natively by field workers, it strikes them very novel and often funny. Raisa, a Bosnian national field worker explained how this humor can lead to demotivation in Americans, who are a “sensitive nation”.

1. most of the time its funny for us
2. because they sound like two year old babies.
3. but not in a way that we wanna {abrupt cut-off}
4. this is the difference between Americans and Bosnians {intonaionally an aside}
5. Bosnians
6. when we hear Americans speaking Bosnian
7. it’s so {hesitation}
8. it’s funny {rapid speech, after hesitation}
9. not in a way that
10. “I wanna humiliate you”
11. but funny in a way like awww {cute noise}
12. they’re trying to learn my language
13. that’s so cute
14. it’s really sweet that you’re trying to learn
15. and every time someone makes a mistake in language
16. its funny in our
17. we are just people who love to joke a lot
18. whenen Americans make a joke in language its hilarious
19. we’re not trying to humiliate them
20. but just say it’s so frickin’ funny.
21. “but keep learning!
22. we want you to learn the language!
23. it’s just that what you said was really funny
you do not have to get upset about it or anything”
I’ve seen many times when Americans get upset
because **they’re really sensitive as a nation**
and they would start not to learn language from that point
and they would **not want to learn more**
they would close
and shut down
and wouldn’t speak in public.

(Raisa, Bosnia, field interview 2012)

Earlier in the interview Raisa noted that many Bosnians speak English and thus they will
not speak Serbo-Croatian with Americans. Bosnians laughing at Americans’ mistakes is
another obstacle to their learning which Raisa identified (lines 7-8, 11, 20). For the
university-educated Americans, who have attained a position of respect and competence
in American society, being described as funny (lines 1, 8, 16, 20, 23), two-year old babies
(line 2) who are cute (line 13) or sweet (line 14) may not be often the conversational
persona they want to exhibit, especially while having a deep “spiritual” conversation.
Since language helpers take on a “nurturing” identity, it may feel especially funny to be
correcting grown men who are infantilized in host nationals’ eyes by their mistakes.

This inability to project a respectable competent persona results in “sensitivity”
(line 26). Even with me, an American interviewer, Raisa’s apparent hesitation to come
out with the claim “it’s funny” (lines 6-8), might represent her doubt of whether I am
“sensitive” or not. Raisa positions Bosnians as tough; in one meeting, the Americans
were asked to share about hard things in their childhood, and they all laughed when it
was Raisa’s turn, realizing how insignificant their experiences were compared with
Raisa’s harrowing childhood in the Siege of Sarajevo. Americans’ “sensitivity” results in
them being upset (line 25), closing off (line 29), shutting down (line 30) and silence (line
31). Certainly these behaviors would interrupt the input-interaction-output model of
language acquisition, making the perceived “cost” of attempting to use Serbo-Croatian feel high.

The “funniness” of non-native host language productions is probably inversely proportional to the social capital (Bourdieu 1991) ascribed to a language. Within the perspective of the sociolinguistics of globalization (Blommaert 2003, 2010), Bourdieu’s social capital might be seen as the amount of authority that the centre of the national standard language (one of many centres with authority over a speaker’s language behavior) exerts over the language behavior of even non-native speakers of that language, analogous to a gravitational pull. In a language which affords high social capital or is associated with an influential centre (measured by the number of fluent non-native speakers) such as Spanish, speakers would be used to hearing non-native, “baby-like” utterances from adult language learners. In a language with low social capital or which exerts less influence, such as Hungarian or Slovene, the sheer novelty of such utterances coming from an adult would make it hard to suppress the “funniness”. Tara explained this in her interview at StepOut 2010, and used it as an argument against trying to learn the language pre-field. Presumably, Hungarians would only accept language with a perfect accent, which could only be learned in the field.

Hungarian is normally spoken just by Hungarians. You, like in English we are used to hearing English and with a Hispanic accent, Mexican or Puerto Rican. It was different... with someone with a Hindi accent or a Chinese accent. Any kind of accent you know. It’s on TV, so with Hungarian is not... (Tara. Hungary, StepOut, 2010)

Tara and Jim when interviewed on the field claim that Hungarians can only understand learners whose accent is near perfect. Jim is discussing how a Hungarian friend told him he has only ever spoken Hungarian with fluent native
speakers. They are misunderstood when trying to answer the question of where they are from, with the Hungarian suburb Diósd, containing a bimoraic mid round back vowel.

1 J: he said “any Hungarian I hear anywhere in the world they talk like I do”  
2 and so when people see us  
3 and they realize were not Hungarian  
4 like even I think we’re saying things pretty darn close  
5 like they act like they don’t have a clue what were telling them  
6 T: like even just the town Diosd, the “o” has an accent, like  
7 J: “ooo” [o:] “Diooosd” [di’oːʃt]  
8 T: the “o” there  
9 you have to say it twice  
10 like long  
11 J: [o:] and finally after 10 min. they say “ oh Diooosd” [di.oːʃt’]  
12 and we’re like “yeah that’s what we’ve been saying!!”  
13 but I think it just throws them  
14 because they expect like we’re from Detroit or something  
15 and so to try to think of an American city  
16 and we don’t say it quite the way they’re used to hearing it  
17 so that makes it worse  
(Jim and Tara, Hungary, field interview, 2012)

Jim and Tara claim that Hungarians can’t even recognize the pronunciation of their own city because of the [o:] vowel (lines 5). In lines 7 and 11, Jim pronounces a bimoraic vowel, but when voicing the Hungarians in line 11, he has them making it trimoraic. It’s not only that they were not expecting a Hungarian city in the answer (lines 14-15), but also that Hungarians cannot reconstruct non-native pronunciations at all (lines 5, 16), as they only ever hear fluent native Hungarian (line 1). To the extent that host nationals’ laughter at the novelty of language mistakes cuts learners off from interaction, “sensitive” field workers may find it even more difficult to acquire a language like Slovene or Hungarian, in which non-native accents and utterances are quite rare. Most of my field workers reported that this was something they had to work through, and Carter in Serbo-Croatian expressed real frustration with Bosnians’ misunderstandings.
7.5.3 Local beliefs about the possibility of host language acquisition

Host nationals at the local level called into question not only the possibility, but also the practicality of learning the host language. This is especially true for the European languages; Love the World staff learning Spanish, Arabic and Mandarin did not report the same dynamic. Carter and Jack report that “Arhan is always saying ‘you do not have to speak Bosnian just speak to me in English.’” This attitude is vividly illustrated in the following narrative about ordering coffee, in which Carter expresses frustration with Bosnians’ refusal to take their attempts to learn the language seriously.

```
1 C: I sit down and the waiter comes
2 I’m on the phone
3 and she asks what I’d like
4 and I said
5 ništo za mene (nothing for me)
6 and then she leaves
7 and she’s like making coffee
8 and my friend Arhan’s watching her
9 and like “she’s making your coffee!”
10 I was like “really?”
11 “yeah she thought you said ‘isto za mene’”
12 I: what’s ‘isto’?
13 C: y’know like ‘same as, same for me’
14 and he just ordered a coffee and I was like “oh... well... oh well”
15 “I’ll just pay for it and Boris you can drink mine. I apologize”
16 Arhan’s like “You need to just speak in English”
17 J: Ah!
18 I: oh
19 C: No! I’m like no. this is ordering coffee!
20 like I’ve ordered coffee like
21 this isn’t even a rung on the ladder
22 this is like just stepping up to the ladder
23 like
24 that’s silly
25 I: aww … when you said that I understood
26 C: it’s like
27 it’s like
```
he goes
one of his friends was like
“you just need to ask us first if that’s what you should say”
and I was like “that’s stupid!”
“no!”
“listen, I’m learning this language,
and sometimes that means you get a coffee when you don’t want one”
I’m like “she could misunderstand what YOU said”
like that’s not that important, that just happens!”

Arhan in this narrative accuses Carter (lines 9-11) of not having pronounced ništò clearly, a case of a bumbling American placing an undue burden on a fellow Bosnian, the waitress. This results in a multi-layered rejection of Carter in lines 16 and 26-30. Arhan and his friend reportedly call into question not only the success of his Serbo-Croatian acquisition, but also Carter’s attempt to re-scale himself as a national, and a legitimate participant in the rhythms of natural life. Carter’s failure to be an authentic national gives Arhan and his friend Boris the opportunity to scale themselves as global. By making use of the Europe-wide indexical meanings of English, Arhan portrays himself and his compatriots as educated, English-understanding trans-nationals.

Carter in lines 19-24 and 31-32 rejects in turn Arhan’s rejection. He defends his right to learn and use the language, as prescribed by his current model of learnerhood. The “sensitivity” which Raisa diagnosed in Americans is perhaps on display here, although to his credit, Carter does not “close” or “stop speaking” instead downplaying (in the narrative at least, if not in the real situation) the misunderstanding in lines 31-34. As an audience, I align with Carter in line 25, even though I have no ability to judge the comprehensibility of the original utterance reported in line 5. He has recruited me to defend his right to use the language. After discussing how he left money at the cafe with
Arhan and Boris for the coffee, Carter continues this narrative. The waitress in fact did not misunderstand, and the money he left to pay for it was unnecessary.

45 C: (voicing Arhan) “she didn’t make you a coffee
46 it was for somebody else and
47 what do you want me to do with your money?”
48 (voicing himself) “just hold onto it and give it to me when I see you
49 by the way...
50 you guys SUCK at Bosnian!”
51 {Jack and I are laughing}
52 I was like
53 “she at least understood what I was saying.
54 you guys are idiots!”
55 {Jack laughs loudly}
56 next time I see Boris
57 I’m gonna be like
58 Boris
59 when you need to say something in Bosnian
60 just tell me what you want to say
61 and I’ll uh
62 I’ll let you know
63 J: yeah Arhan is always saying
64 you don’t have to speak Bosnian
65 just speak to me in English
66 I: do you think it’s cause they’re really proud of their English?
67 C: Oh yeah!
68 I: It’s like they get so much of their identity in showing it off?
69 C: that’s a ton of our students

Carter and Jack enthusiastically agree with my assessment that identity was at stake in this narrative. By rejecting Carter’s rescaling himself as national, the students were able to position themselves as transnational, expert in language (lines 63-65). There are limits to how imagination can be used by speakers to rescale themselves; “while imagination offers what appears to be limitless possibilities, we also need to realize that it can be reined in by social constraints and expectations” (DeCosta 2010:775). Carter is limited by
such constraints when trying to imagine himself as a Bosnian national, and in the following story Arhan is likewise constrained from imaging himself as American.

This episode with the coffee is perhaps meaningful to Carter because he was able to simultaneously defend his control of at least a truncated repertoire of Serbo-Croatian (line 53) and position himself as a language expert (lines 50, 54, 59-62). In fact this narrative launches a further discussion where Carter and Jack contest the transnational identity that Arhan claims by “showing off” (line 68). Carter emphatically aligns with my suggestion that “a ton of our students” (line 69) are “proud of their English” (line 66).

Arhan’s scaling of himself as “transnational” is then discussed. In lines 70-73, Arhan is accused of portraying himself as a “little American”. His persona may fool the Bosnians on the tram (line 77, 84-86), but not authentic Americans who are “speaking normal “ (line 75) i.e., in English.

74 C: we’ll be on the tram
75 and we’ll just be speaking normal
76 people on the tram will be like
77 “wow there’s so many Americans here”
78 they’ll be speaking Bosnian
79 which I could understand
80 so obviously Arhan can understand them
81 and he’ll be like
82 “I’m from Tuzla!”
83 {laughing} “I’m not from America”
84 and they’ll be like “oh! sorry!
85 you were just like speaking English
86 and we thought you were”
87 J: but to US he doesn’t sound American at all
88 C: no!
89 I: but to them?
90 C: to us he has like a CRAZY accent
91 J: cause it’s on purpose like
92 he THINKS that’s how he’s SUPPOSED to talk
Carter and Jack contest Arhan’s ability to authentically use English (lines 87, 90, 92), mirroring Arhan’s contesting of Carter’s ability to authentically use Serbo-Croatian. This narrative shows that learners do not passively incorporate everything from locally-circulating models into their own model of learnerhood. Carter tenaciously clings to the beliefs about the natural progress of language learning projects (lines 33-36) and the importance of continuing to use it in interaction, even in the face of the kinds of criticism narrated by Raisa. Raisa may see Carter as “shutting down” in response to criticism, but Carter does not position himself that way in his narrative. Raisa herself does admit that “everybody speaks some level of English, so they’d rather just speak that level of English. And especially for Bosnian students, if they see someone that they have an opportunity to talk English with, they will talk in English”. When host nationals find out that the Love the World field workers are attempting to learn the host language, they are usually quite surprised, a reaction I observed many times in my field visits, even by Jack himself two years earlier.

And they’d say “you speak English, why would you need to know Bosnian? You’re not going to be able to use this anywhere else in the world, only in this you know one country. Why would you, why would you spend your time to learn this language?” (Jack, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

And she was like “why are you learning Slovak?” Because there’s only 5 million Slovak speakers in the world and in the business world, it’s a pointless language to learn. (Jacob, Slovakia, StepOut 2010)

Most ask if the learners have some ethnic heritage in the host country, or are married to a host national. International Staff report that host nationals often protest that there language is so unimportant “just a few million speakers”, and that you “get nothing by speaking it, since we all speak English”.

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Sentiments such as these, that it’s not worth the trouble of learning the language, may be intended by host nationals as an act of hospitality, relieving foreigners of their burden to acquire the host language. From a field worker’s perspective however, if host nationals truly believe it is pointless for foreigners to learn the host language, it would be an even greater “gift”, even more altruistic, if the field worker did indeed acquire heart language proficiency. Indeed, I observed that many host nationals had to be very actively dissuaded from speaking in English and coerced into using the host language, appealing at times to a kind of “friendship contract”. I observed that Mark had a long reverse conversation with a Bosnian student, where the student spoke in English and Mark spoke in Serbo-Croatian, which he judged to better than the students’ English (lines 1 and 2).

1 M: well I’m better in Bosnian
2 than he knows in English
3 he would still try to revert to English
4 to push English
5 he wants to use that
6 he has that
7 he wants to use it
8 you know
9 I: maybe it’s some kind of an identity thing?
10 how he wants to be perceived?
11 M: yeah I think so
   (Mark, Bosnia, field interview, 2012)

As much as the student was “pushing English” (line 4), Mark was also pushing Serbo-Croatian. The conversation which I observed unfolded like a verbal game of chicken, each speaking in the other’s “heart language” which was certainly inefficient, but allowed each to practice. More importantly allowed each to stake a claim to a differently-scaled identity. In such a reverse conversation, Mark can scale himself as a “national” and the student as a “global” English-speaking agent. Mark agreed with my suggestion that identity concerns were overriding efficiency concerns in these types of interactions. Mark
immediately goes on to explain that with a local church leader it took concerted effort to get him to agree to speak in Serbo-Croatian. As the local leader’s English was excellent, English would be the most efficient choice, but the pastor committed to speaking in Serbo-Croatian because of a prior agreement (line 3, 6-7).

1 M: Like with [pastor]
2 I think he speaks to me in Bosnian
3 because he’s committed to that
4 not because it’s more efficient
5 I: did it naturally happen that way or did you decide that?
6 M: we have talked about it
7 and he knows that I want to learn Bosnian
8 there have been points
9 when we were planning [name of event]
10 where there is something really important
11 and I want to make sure that I’m clear
12 and I’ve broken into English to explain that
13 but generally when he calls me we talk in Bosnian
(Mark, Bosnia, field conversation, 2012)

When Mark does use English, it feels transgressive, “broken into English” (line 12), and is only justifiable when for the sake of a larger project (lines 9-10), he wants to make absolute certain that he is understood correctly.

This tendency of even the most sympathetic listeners to switch over to English, whether for the sake of efficiency or of hospitality, ends up demotivating learners to invest in the hard work of language learning. Due to limited host language proficiency, Love the World field workers tend to build the deepest relationships most quickly with those nationals who already speak English well. The more they become surrounded by fluent English speakers, the less motivation there is to learn the host language, not to mention the fact that they are exposed to less authentic input-in-interaction. While StepOut emphasizes the deep need to learn the “heart language”, practical experiences, at least in the first years in the field, can tend to overpower that message, suggesting that
“English proficiency is enough”. Indeed according to the survey results presented in Table 6.1, this English proficiency is reported as expatriates’ biggest obstacle to motivation and host language proficiency. Those few individuals who managed to make significant progress in language acquisition in the face of all these obstacles and discouragements are explained as being “high aptitude learners” or “language geniuses”.

The most local level is the private world of individuals’ own personal experiences, the “conversations” a learner can have with past selves in a decision making process. The past selves International Staff most often referred to were themselves as students in high school or college language classes, and themselves as Sprinters, employing a wide variety of language learning techniques. These experiences were perhaps the most influential of all the scales discussed in this chapter in shaping language learning behavior.

7.6 **SUMMARY**

In this chapter I have shown how models of learnerhood circulate among different scalar levels of the organization. The cumulative effect of nested scales is polycentric, as in Michael’s seemingly contradictory learning preferences (Table 7.1). Each scale is associated with a different ideological center, each of which may exert influence or authority over a learners’ language behavior. In any given representation of learnerhood, learners may orient to the models associated with their personal experience, the local ideologies of learning among host nationals, local models of learning among expatriates, their national or regional office’s policies or the models of learning espoused by Love the World as a whole.

Blommaert, whose work I used to introduce scale, does not strictly differentiate geographic space from time (Blommaert & Huang 2010), but speaks of “semiotized
"TimeSpace" (Blommaert 2007). Although the centres for each scale can potentially influence decision making on the field, individual learners largely experience this polycentricity chronologically. The most influential scale for Sprinters may be the local team, at StepOut the organizational scale, and then upon arrival the national scale. Moving onto the next stage in the trajectory of a Love the World worker is closely tied up with moving into the influence from another scalar centre. The devolution of responsibility for language policy and accountability to ever more local scales can partly be explained then by the fact the global influence comes first, and as a field worker gets integrated into their field site, the local models become more influential. In Chapters 8 and 9 then, I will attempt to explain how learnerhood evolves for typical and atypical language learners as they move through the various stages of their career as field workers.
8. TRAJECTORIES OF LEARNERHOOD: GOALS, OUTCOMES, CONSEQUENCES

In this chapter I present an abstracted view of the various steps of a typical “Love the World” worker’s career. This perspective helps me take the common themes described in Chapter 6, and organized according to scale in Chapter 7 and present them in terms of the ontogenetic trajectory of these language learners, through the various stages of connection to their organization and their host culture. As DeCosta notes, any account of language learning within an identity framework must “take into account a learner’s positioning across different spatial and temporal scales” (DeCosta 2010:777). By paying attention to time, I will demonstrate how learnerhood gets produced for the “typical” field worker in Eastern Europe, and explain some of the situational factors that most shape the evolution.

The helpfulness of trying to abstract a “typical” trajectory could be called into question, as learnerhood is created microgenetically (Lemke 2000) and is necessarily different for each learner. This approach is justified however by the fact that I am looking at a multi-sited organization and seeking to find common themes across many nodes in an assemblage. In order to map themes (such as seeing language learning as vocabulary learning and not morphosyntactic learning), which are common across many nodes, I as a researcher need to “zoom out”. Of course, each of my participants had their own unique path and took a unique trajectory in the development of their sense of learnerhood during their involvement with Love the World. In this section, I will be engaging in a certain
amount of “entextualization” (Bauman & Briggs 1990), aggregating and in some ways decontextualizing data about learnerhood which I gained through observations and through interviews for those stages which I was not able to observe directly. The organization structures opportunities and expectations for language differently for the different programs and levels of involvement within the organization.

The most overarching pattern I found across the organization is that individuals took much longer than anticipated to acquire communicative competence in the truncated repertoire which they consider ideal for doing field work and ministry. Some field workers never acquired the repertoires they considered to be minimally necessary. Because the organization devolves responsibility from the global scale down to the more local levels, as described in Chapter 7, field workers experience this slowness or failure as a personal or perhaps moral failure, given that much of their sense of being a moral and successful field worker depends on being able to communicate in the “heart language”. Although learners may experience this as guilt or personal failure, by zooming out and looking at the organization, I can show how the processes which contribute to slowness or even failure are socially distributed; this may ease the weight of the moral burden on individual learners somewhat. In this chapter I aim to give a more realistic account of what is actually possible for learners, given the decentralized and sometimes ad hoc system of support and accountability.

The steps in a typical worker’s involvement with Love the World worker are student involvement, short-term projects, the Sprint internship, StepOut training, arrival on-field, developing long-term field workers, and mature long-term field workers. As individuals move into new roles, they can experience a dramatic shift in the presupposed
expectations for an ideal language acquirer. Understanding how these roles differ, partly due to organizational policies, partly due to organizational inertia, and partly due to field workers’ own preferences is key to understanding why language acquisition happens slower than anticipated, and why workers’ projections for ultimate attainment get revised downwards.

8.1 Learnerhood before getting involved with Love the World

Before deciding to do an internship with Love the World, most field workers were involved with local chapters of Love the World on college campuses in the United States. The fact that they are college-educated, at public state universities, and active in a Christian student community all shape the model of second language learnerhood they bring to their first forays into overseas service with Love the World. As explained in detail in Section 6.2, learners predominantly think of language acquisition in terms of the academic methods and formal classroom settings they had been exposed to in high school and college. These are characterized by a lack of contact with native speakers, assessment based on formal accuracy, and explicit English-mediated instruction. In addition to this approach to language learning, Love the World field workers have a model of what it looks like to do cross-cultural service, a model informed both by their evangelical communities, and contemporary university notions of diversity and tolerance.

Evangelical communities often circulate icons of cross-cultural service and missionary personhood, both in the form of biographies and narratives about “great missionaries” of the past. Iconic figures (Fraser & Gordon 1994:311) crystallize the doxa, “commonsense beliefs that escape the analytical scrutiny of those who feel they are merely an audience” into a discursive figure which can be indexically appealed to. Carr
notes that “everyday ways of speaking and interacting” are key to the establishment and sustenance of these powerful iconic figures (2010:25). Missionary icons such as William Carey, Amy Carmichael, and Jim Elliot were mentioned by Love the World staff as role models, whose biographies appeared on their bookshelves. These biographies are part of the discursive figures of “missionary success”, against who field workers view their own service, and as such are taught to “erase” language learning from their presentations of their field service to themselves and their supporters. As an organization-internal document stated:

Getting to a point of relative fluency often took more than a year of uphill work. For fans of missionary biographies, this was not welcome news—almost all of those stories skip over the language learning phase and get straight to the ministry phase. (Letter from East Asia region on language learning policy)

Future field workers are also exposed to role models of cross-cultural service by visits of field workers and development workers to evangelical churches. These visits are seen as “repaying” congregations for their financial or spiritual support. I have attended dozens of these presentations, and while they are full of pictures of children, wells, school projects, and dramatic stories, fluency in the host language is taken for granted, and rarely do these reporting field workers spend time emphasizing how difficult the language is, and how much they may be struggling to attain desired proficiency. Love the World field workers themselves have to give such presentations to their supporting communities, and are trained by Love the World to focus on engaging stories and encouraging reports, which may discourage them from confessing their difficulties with language acquisition, especially to a general audience who largely has not had to learn a language before. This
naiveté of supporters in regards to language acquisition became clear to Joshua, when he reported back after his first year of the Sprint internship.

1 what I was thinking is
2 “yeah in a year I’m going to speak Hungarian”
3 I’m going to Hungary and why not?”
4 a number people expected that of me
5 friends back in the states that
6 when I would come back
7 they would say
8 “how’s the language going”
9 and those assumptions that
10 if you spend a year in Mexico you learn Spanish
11 if you spent a year Hungary you would learn Hungarian
   (Joshua, Hungary, field interview 2012)

Before his field service, Joshua enacts a prior learnerhood, conforming to the expectations of “people” and “friends” that language learning is something that could be done in a year (lines 2, 11) regardless of language difficulty (contrast Spanish and Hungarian) presumably because of the “magic” of immersion. These assumptions, which he shared, are belied by his later experience. His learnerhood upon returning from his first Sprint year clashed with that of most monolingual Americans, including his former self.

12 so after the first year
13 you did not know very much
14 and you felt disappointed because
15 a lot of people asked “how’s it going?”
16 and I did not know what to say how to answer that
17 they would say “do you speak Hungarian?”
18 I would say “well I speak a lot more than I DID”

Joshua does not treat his experience as unusual, but rather generalizes it through the pronoun “you” (lines 12-14) to encompass all field workers in “the same boat”. Now when the “people” (lines 4, 15) asked, Joshua had to uncomfortably justify himself, to the chorus of onlookers sizing him up.
Few of the role models for cross-cultural service, both within the organization and in the “missionary biographies” referred to in the letter from the East Asia region, present in great detail the difficulties of language learning. Biography as a kind of self-writing has a long history in the West; certain moral aspects of the lives of 19th century missionaries like are Hudson Taylor, William Carey, Adoniram Judson and David Livingstone, are highlighted in their biographies, while language learning is assumed or downplayed for their readership. “Fans of missionary biographies” and the congregational audiences of missionaries’ fundraising reports may thus underestimate the time and energy required for successful language acquisition. Since the failure of past attempts to learn languages in school can be attributed to “horrible teachers”, future field workers may just assume that if they are in the field, they will become immersed in the language, and learn it as easily as small children. They may not take into account the pervasiveness of English in other cultural settings, and the emotional wherewithal needed to constantly enter into target language conversations. Under the shadow of their American supporters’ expectations, Love the World field workers may experience failure to achieve proficiency as acutely painful.

The university environment also shapes personal and organizational discourses on diversity. Mary often framed language behaviors which she found ineffective as rooted in an ethnocentric, Western worldview. The emphasis on diversity and listening charitably to diverse stories is an important theme in the contemporary American academy. This outlook would lead learners to place a high value on language proficiency, learning the language of another, the “gift of the stranger” in Smith’s (2000) terminology. Learners are very sensitive to not coming across as “American”, in order to value and respect their host
culture. Consider the following statement by Todd, a StepOut 2010 participant I interviewed, who had done a Sprint in Africa and was headed back long term.

1 and I talk about God’s GRACE
2 the very first thing they do is turn to their friends
3 and start speaking [host language]
4 and if I do not know any [host language]
5 I just sit there and smile and have no idea what’s happening
6 and they work it out in a committee
7 um that’s how it works umm
8 and
9 the thing is is that if
10 if I’m able to speak [host language]
11 all of a sudden as they start talking
12 I’m able to insert somewhere
13 “oh no, you actually have that a little bit wrong
14 let me help clarify some…”
15 and it’s counting on
16 all of a sudden the onus is upon myself to
17 ah, to be able to communicate
18 (...)  
19 they have to wrestle with it
20 when there’s all sorts of different communication errors
21 of things they either do not understand
22 or concepts that they do not have, so it’s
23 it’s a huge thing, and so if you can speak their language,
24 that just I think in a lot of ways
25 reduces their barrier?

(Todd, Country X, StepOut 2010)

Todd imagines his future proficient self (lines 9-25), using imagination to “transcending time and space and creating new images of the world and himself (Wenger 1998:176). This future self is helpful (line 14), respectfully bearing a burden (lines 16, 23-26) by learning the host language. Without language proficiency, host nationals have to work (line 6), wrestle (line 19), and deal with errors (line 20) and misunderstandings (line 21). Thus proficiency becomes a “huge thing” (line 23) not only for an empowered Todd (c.f.
line 5), but also a “relief” for the host nationals. An even more overt example, of how non-
proficient selves are marginalized, whereas proficient selves partake in the “gift of the
stranger” (Smith 2000), is the excerpt which I partly analyzed in Section 6.1. Anelisa and
Jack fear being ethnocentric or re-enforcing ideologies about American hegemonic power.
If their Serbo-Croatian repertoires remain too truncated to engage in “heart language
conversation”, they might be easily dismissed as part of some “American” project (lines
37-40), mapped by hypothetical discursive Bosnians onto a “different mentality” (line 13,
20, 25) or even “part of a cult” (line 30).

[Not being able to speak Bosnian well]
1 Helps somebody to just say
2 “You know well
3 you’re nice and all but
4 this message of
5 Jesus Christ
6 that’s for Americans
7 you speak English
8 and so
9 we’re Bosnians, you know,
10 we’re different
11 we do not speak the same language
12 and we have our own”
13 they would say “we have a different mentality”
14 they would say in English
15 I do not know what the word is in Bosnian
16 they’d always you say you know
17 “We’re Muslim
18 and we’re Catholic”
19 or whatever
20 because we’re a different mentality than
21 you are”
   (Jack, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

In this imagined past, Jack is excluded because of a strong “language = culture = nation”
ideology. This ideology, which I have shown to typify missiology in the 19th and 20th
centuries is extended by Jack to include religion, echoing Martin Luther’s cuius regio eius
religio (whence the region, thence the religion) ideology. The language English gets mapped onto the culture and nation of Americans and then onto Protestantism (lines 4-7, 31-32). Jack’s ideology ignores ways that English is appropriated as a Bosnian language in the local context as well, even though Jack has his Bosnians speaking in English in the narrated world (line 14). It also ignores the roles that English plays as a unifying language of Islam and Catholicism.

22 yeah that’s kind of um
23 what I feel is the biggest thing is that when we were there before
24 it felt a lot of times um
25 American Christians and Bosnian Christians were viewed in a very different way
26 Americans if you’re protestant or if you’re an evangelical
27 oh that’s just all Americans are protestant
28 but if you’re Bosnian and you’re Christian
29 and evangelical Christians
30 you’d probably be considered part of a cult
31 and so the more that we do ministry in English it just propagates this idea of
32 like American Christianity
33 and um
34 you know
35 we do not
36 we do not want that to be our message
37 we do not want people to become American
38 we want them to know God
39 and that’s not an American message
40 you know the majority of Christians you know
41 are not even American
   (Anelisa, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

Indeed post-war Bosnians have a sort of NGO fatigue (Ekiert, Kubik, and Vachudova 2007), alluded to in the following poster seen on the street, which reads “Against internationally organized (međunarodno organizovane) poverty”. The sign enacts a play on the Serbo-Croatian word for NGO, međunarodna organizacija (international organization).
By speaking Serbo-Croatian well, Jack and Anelisa hope to show that they are different from “most Americans” and that their projects may be more well-received by host nationals. A host national field worker, Raisa, corroborates the field workers’ own perspective.

If an American comes to Bosnia, it’s a huge thing, everyone will ask them why did you move to Bosnia? America is so much better!" but if you learn the language on top of that, it’s really like people have respect for them, because they were willing to sit down and learn this little language in some little country you know? (Raisa, field interview 2012)

Mark also felt that Serbo-Croatian proficiency significantly changes the reception he gets in the country, “Even if our (him and a prototypical Bosnian) relationship is in English- the fact that I can speak in Bosnian and that I want to speak in Bosnian- they respect me more. I get out of the category of ‘most Americans’ into a different category”. In conclusion, before they even get involved in cross-cultural work with Love the World, field workers tend to have a robust vision for language learning as an academic (if ineffective) enterprise. Because of their exposure to evangelical communities they may
have a naïveté about how difficult language learning in the field will be, but because of their experiences as students at public universities, are sensitive to questions of diversity, ethnocentrism, and American imperialism. In Bosnia, which has an intense recent history with NGO and translocal development projects, the Bosnians I interviewed did see the longer term Love the World workers as different from other expatriates, in that they tried harder to learn Serbo-Croatian, and sought to become Bosnian. The Sprinters however had their claims to Bosnianness rejected; as their stay was much shorter, and their language learning efforts appeared less serious or less successful, their claim to being “not a typical American” was viewed as being more tenuous.

8.2 Learnerhood after Spring and Summer Projects

As participants in chapters of Love the World at universities in the United States, the first steps toward joining International Staff come in the form of one-week spring break trips, or six-week long summer projects. On these trips, students do some sightseeing, and meet long term field workers who are expected to prepare some sort of opportunity for these students to participate in their ongoing projects. These trips can be transformative for students who have never been overseas before. One member of a week-long team sent to Italy was reported at a staff meeting to have said “God is doing so much in my heart” even though all they had done at that point was sightseeing, and hadn’t even begun other projects such as providing food to refugees or meeting with students on campus. These short term projects, while meaningful, can give a skewed vision of life in another country—life without language proficiency. Miriam Jerome, a professional counselor of field workers who leave the field says:
No one who has not lived cross-culturally can understand what it means to live cross-culturally. One of the downsides that we have... People who do short-term missions have only a honeymoon experience- will rave “this is wonderful” and have a very unrealistic view of what it is like to live cross-culturally day-in day-out 24-7. They usually have a translator, they have someone with them, they do not know what it’s like to get a driver’s license and stand in lines for hours. Many of them go with unrealistic expectations. I believe in having as much preparation as you can have pre-field before you go. (Miriam Jerome, personal communication)

Such “honeymoon experiences” are often reported to be formative in Love the World field workers’ decision to commit to working in their host country, first as a Sprinter, and then as an International Staff.

Some language learning does occur in the six-week summer projects. Theresa reported that in her summer project to Bosnia, the language learning was ineffective. It was “all charts and overwhelming”, the teacher taught to the level of her more advanced husband, which “demotivated her from studying”. Kathleen, in Italy said, “I was there for six weeks for a summer project but did not learn much Italian. On summer project, surrounded by Americans, interacting with students in English, language learning is not at all a part of it, except for a few basic phrases on the first day. My main phrase was ‘Do you speak English?’”. Sara, now serving in Italy, did her summer project in a different country. She said “once I got immersed in the culture and used it each day, going to campus and stuff, I still have stuff I recall in [that language], and I was only there for seven weeks”. Joshua, serving in Hungary, is a self-confessed highly motivated and high aptitude learner. Like Sara, he acquired some language in the summer project, and he is now serving in Hungary long term. Those early one-week and six-week experiences laid the foundation (line 6) for his language proficiency during his Sprint internship and his long-term service.

1  I had this high value for learning language in my free time
Although Love the World hopes that people will make a long term commitment after a short term experience, as Joshua did, the majority of people who participate in these projects never return to those countries, and don’t perhaps “have this high value for language” (line 1). For those who “get a heart” for the country, they can choose to return for Sprint internships. With the exception of motivated learners like Joshua however, most will have acquired just a few phrases, and developed a robust habit of relying on translators, English-speaking host nationals, and “getting by” all in English.

**8.3 Learnerhood during the Sprint Internship**

Mark describes the role of the Sprint internship program with a military analogy, “The summer project is like the infantry, they are expendable, but many of our best contacts came from summer project people” (described in Section 8.1.2). Mark draws on his experience hosting and organizing these summer projects, a responsibility he had as a Sprinter in Croatia and as International Staff in Bosnia. “Expendability” here relates to pacing; summer projects can have a very intensive schedule, one that would burn out longer-term workers. They are also expendable in that they have a short field stay with little long term impact on the field site.

Mark continues, “Sprinters are the next level up, like tanks, you do not want to lose them, as there is more invested”. This explains the degree of emotional concern the
Sprinters in Ljubljana reported getting, so much care that it began to distract them from their work. Mark says his own sprint leader thought that language learning was unimportant, but Mark disagreed and spent considerable effort in trying to learn Croatian. This learning played a significant role in his decision to return long-term, and Mark commented that “people who are able to order hamburger in the language on a summer project are much more likely to come back on Sprint”, and people who can have good conversations in the host language “on Sprint are much more likely to come back as International Staff”. In this section I will describe in more detail the learnerhoods of Sprinters. Mary, in her report on language learning, notes that:

80% of the staff coming through StepOut have been overseas for 1-3 years as Sprinters. About 50% come to StepOut as beginners (some low and some high beginners), 30% as intermediate learners and 20% as advanced learners (many of these studied the language in college or were diligent/eager in their Sprint years). (Document from Mary to global HR staff, 2011)

For this reason, the learnerhood of longer-term field workers is crucially affected by their Sprint experiences, and those years are often the most formative time for their sense of when to use and how to learn the target language.

As noted in Section 4.5.1, the Sprint Brief which is designed to prepare them for living overseas is almost silent on language learning. Most of its organizers have never successfully acquired a language themselves. Sprinters such as Anelisa and Jack often come to the field naive about both language learning and their target language (lines 1, 7, 12-13) before heading overseas, having done little preparation beforehand (line 1, 11).

1 I did not really have a good concept
2 I had never been there before
3 um
4 before I went to live there
5 and um
6 what was I going to say
so all I knew was that it was sort of like Russian
(Anelisa, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

when

I lived in Bosnia
I lived there for about two years
but when I went there I had never spoken any Bosnian before
I did not know what it looked like
I did not know what it sounded like
(Jack, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

It is noticeable that both Jack and Anelisa blame their lack of metalinguistic knowledge on the fact that they had never been there before (lines 4,11). In their minds, knowledge of Serbo-Croatian could only be obtained in Bosnia, as if there were no resources to learn about the language, or even learn some of the language before arriving. This is consistent with Love the World’s tendency to downplay pre-field language learning in the models of learnerhood it holds out. Again language is closely aligned with a country, and treated as if it is geographically bounded, in a language = culture = country ideology (Coulmas 1988). This is especially interesting, as only a few minutes later they discuss their interactions with the Bosnian emigrant community in their American hometown, after they returned from Sprint. The fact that Serbo-Croatian has currency outside of Bosnia was a new discovery for them after returning from Sprint.

I stated earlier that recruits are coming from public universities, where they are primed to be sensitive to re-enforcing perceptions of American imperialism. Yet the Sprint program and International Staff programs are separate, and run by different organizations. Sprint is run out of the United States as an extension of the work with American university students, while International Staff is treated as a professional career and run out of the organization’s HR department. Sprinters may be a more internally diverse group than those who often self-select to become long-term field workers and may not care as much
as the self-selecting long term field workers’ do about learning the language and are thus more receptive to having language learning downplayed. This explains why International Staff are sometimes mortified by their Sprint peers, who don’t seem to care about language learning. International Staff are more invested in the host language, and while both groups are sensitive to charges of imperialism, Sprinters are more willing to tolerate “being American”.

8.3.1 Learning downplayed

Many different voices discourage Sprinters from taking language learning seriously, the Sprint Brief organizers, previous Sprinters, even local International Staff, who may be discouraged themselves in their language learning and feel able to get by in English. Liz, at the end of her second year Sprinting in Hungary, was told “you do not need to learn language”. She tried meeting with a tutor for 4 months, who used a grammar translation methodology, but it “wasn’t working, I felt like an idiot, so I gave up”. She felt “not a lot of draw to learn language, because especially college students speak English so well. But now I wish I had learned some of it. It would’ve been really cool to learn Hungarian”. Joshua, while he had been doing a Sprint in Hungary, had also been actively discouraged from learning the language. However, as he had had positive experiences at summer project learning it, he:

always valued and thought [Hungarian] was important, even when I came as Sprint in 2004. There wasn’t any emphasis on language in my leadership, but I was just curious as a believer, as a Christian. (Joshua, Hungary, field interview 2012)

Joshua frames his high value for language learning, not only as a reflection of his aptitude or just a curious personality, but as an explicitly moral trait- a befitting response for a
“Christian believer”. This indirectly indicted the Sprint program for downplaying something which believers should focus on. He would:

get tired of running into that roadblock with like the language. A lot of high school students- it wasn’t a problem. But yeah for younger students who did not know English a lot it was frustrating. I would say “do you speak English?” They’d say “no” and then I was done. (Joshua, Hungary, field interview 2012)

His attempt to learn Hungarian as a Sprinter was not purely moral however, but rooted in his frustration with the roadblock of language, and his desire to engage more students in his work on drug addiction and sexual health in schools. These pressures do lead many Sprinters to realize that they need to acquire at least some language. For David, Sprinting in Germany, his goal wasn’t fluency necessarily, but for the “German conversation before the moment of ‘Sprechen Sie englisch?’ (Do you speak English?) to gradually get longer”. Anthony, in Slovakia, wanted to be able to have conversations all in Slovak, and especially, when going to the homes of students he met, to be able to converse with their parents. Roger, now serving long term in the regional office in Budapest also had done a Sprint in Hungary. Like Joshua, he was actively discouraged from learning Hungarian as “a waste of time” and a “distraction from ministry”. However, he did study it in his free time, using textbooks, as he loved learning the language.

In Eastern Europe at least, where I interviewed over a dozen current Sprinters, those who want to spend time learning the language are forced to do it furtively, in their own free time. Their narratives expressed guilt over spending time on language learning, like they were doing something they were not supposed to do. Ariana, Sprinting in Bosnia, was a self-assessed “language nerd” and loved learning the language, to the point where she had been censured for spending so much time speaking with Bosnians to learn the
language.

In contrast to Europe, in Latin American countries such as Venezuela and Argentina, Sprinters are explicitly expected by national leaders to learn the language. The Sprint program assumes there will be a pool of speakers proficient in Spanish from high school or university education. Yet national directors report frustration that the Sprinters do not learn it, and resort to English. I spoke with several workers who had Sprinted in Argentina; they had overestimated their own Spanish proficiency, and national directors overestimated their willingness to use it, which caused significant tension. A similar situation was reported for Venezuela in language policy documents I read. Even when prospective Sprinters hear “you will need Spanish” they may not realize what “need Spanish” will actually mean, and some reported getting conflicting messages from the way language learning is handled at the Sprint Brief where a “don’t spend time on language learning, just find English speakers” mentality was assumed.

8.3.2 Adopting and aligning with Sprint’s “downplaying of learning” philosophy

Sprinters’ lack of language learning, whatever its origin, has longer-term consequences. Kristin attributes her own desire to return to Slovenia and learn its language to her experience as a Sprinter in a letter to her supporters.

God introduced me to the Slovenian people in the 2 years I spent with them. He made me “fall in love” with them. Now through praying faithfully for Slovenia, learning their language, and reading more about their history and struggles, I’m growing in love for them as I know them better.

(Kristin, Slovenia, support letter 2011)

Kristin also positions language learning as an act of love. Although she “fell in love” during her Sprint, when she had only very limited Slovene, now that she is “learning their language” she “knows them better” and is “growing in love”. This is a new dimension to
“heart language” ideology; Kwast’s (1983) imagery of the language as a pathway to the core values is overlain on a Whorfian view that one can know a personified by culture through its language. Learning the heart language not only gives access to host nationals’ “heart”, but also grows love for the imagined national community (Anderson 1991) in the “heart” of the learner.

It is understandable then that Kristin felt very disheartened that the Sprint team she was serving with had been told explicitly during recruitment that Slovenia is a place where you could “only speak English” and do not “even need to learn the language”. Kristin feels that the language situation in Slovenia is more nuanced, saying:

It is hard serving on a team and you know only two of the six people are even trying to really even learn the language. It’s really discouraging and it’s not really motivating, and I think this Sprint team too, how many of them do not take it seriously. (Kristin, Slovenia, conversation 2012)

In Love the World, Sprint teams are first sent to pioneer and establish a presence in a new country, before longer-term field workers’ are sent. If pioneering Sprinters, such as the team in Ljubljana, are discouraged from learning the language, it has significant effects for the ongoing character of the organization. Sprinters’ disinterest in language learning can dishearten the International Staff.

Stacie, Sprinting in Bosnia, was surprised at how important learning Serbo-Croatian had become for her, in opposition to what she heard at Sprint Brief: “I did not know I would need to learn language. They [Sprint recruiters] assured [Sprinters] “the students will speak English” and that “you’ll be fine” but that wasn’t true”. She did not expect to want to learn the language as much she did. “Okay, maybe learn just enough to get by, but I did not expect to want to know more. Really, I wanted to know what was going on, to know what I’m buying. Not knowing things is a bigger deal than I thought it
would be”. Lack of language made her feel isolated from and vulnerable in her new environment, “The first year was a lot, I’d feel anxious if couldn’t read a sign. What if sign said you cannot do this? Like getting on a tram, what if it says I’m supposed to buy a ticket here, or do this?” She also reported that many of the students she interacts with the most speak only limited English, and that it is not true that “the students will speak English”.

Anthony served as a Sprinter in Slovakia. Even though he was reported by the Slovak national staff as being a very successful Slovak learner, he like Joshua felt that this was done in spite of the advice of those in charge, rather than because of it. The long-term staff in Slovakia are all in their late 20’s, and became affiliated with Love the World because of contacts with American Sprinters who largely did not learn Slovak, and sought out English-speaking students. As a consequence, the Slovak national staff today are mostly highly proficient in English, and learned how to “do ministry” in English from English-speaking Sprinters. Although today these staff do most of their work in Slovak, they feel very comfortable speaking in English, and often code-switch. As a result, Love the World may feel “American” even in places where the staff is mostly national, and the connections to English-speaking evangelicals and the use of English-language resources are very common.

This later presented a problem for Jacob, who is an International Staff struggling to learn Slovak. As a Sprinter, he like most was discouraged from seriously learning Slovak. However he met and eventually married a Slovak woman who is now on staff, and their marriage is primarily mediated in English. And as previously stated, all of Jacob’s national co-workers are fluent in English. This has made it very easy to get by in English, even
though he is the only American on his team, and his presence induces code-switches into English at team functions.

The largest consequence of downplaying learning in Sprint is that Sprinters have already spent two years in a city, building networks, figuring out how to live, seeking out opportunities and relationships where English can be spoken, and only token attention paid to language learning. Mark said at StepOut 2010 that Sprint gives you “years of living in the country without knowing the language well and surviving”. Amelia in Hungary admitted at StepOut 2011, “I think the tricky thing is because of the Sprint, I think I mean I’ve learned, we’ve learned, that I could do quite a bit without being fluent” Simon, in Country Y, noticed that:

[There’s] definitely a correlation in Sprint between people who picked up the language who picked up some language, and people who did well the whole year. Those who did not felt uncomfortable in most situations. I would say, language is not the only factor, but it’s easy to retreat from when you are feeling uncomfortable, and it starts a downward spiral because you cannot feel more comfortable in a place where you cannot talk to anybody, and you cannot negotiate new meaning very easily. (Simon, field interview, 2010)

For Simon, Sprinters learning the language is not just a matter of moral imperative, operating more efficiently or growing love for the host nation. The morale and longevity of field workers is at stake, to avoid a “downward spiral” of isolation. The kind of language learning Sprinters do try is often group courses, with tutors who may be untrained, and who rely on grammar-translation approaches which do not stress communication. Such learning habits are hard to break when coming back for a longer term service. Thus, not only the view of whether to learn, but also how to learn the host language is shaped during the Sprint internship.
8.3.3 Negative affect among Sprinters

Mark, in summarizing his thoughts about language learning and Sprinters stated: “I think to sum all that up language is not that important for Sprinters to do their job. It is important that Sprinters come back long-term and it is important for Sprinters to feel comfortable”. This desire for positive affect, that Sprinters would have a positive experience that makes them want to come back as long-term field workers shapes the organization’s response to their learnerhood. In Mark’s country, there is a large Sprint team made of some first-year Sprinters as well as some who returned for the optional second year in the program. Because the second-year Sprinters had negative experiences in their first year with language learning, they decided it would be better for all the Sprinters, including first-years, to take a single language class together, according to Carter so they could “support each other” and even if “language sucked, they could all be in it together”.

This decision, from a language acquisition standpoint, was ill-informed and predictably had a negative effect. Very motivated high aptitude learners and demotivated learners were put in the same class, learners who had not a word of Serbo-Croatian, and those who had been working hard at it for over a year. The result was increased surveillance, comparison and sensitivity, with Sprinters assessing each other’s proficiency. Additionally students were either completely bored or overwhelmed. Given the fact that for most of the year their teacher used a methodology with a high degree of explicit grammar instruction, and few opportunities to communicate, language learning came to be seen as a big burden. This surveillance (lines 2-3), linked to scorn (line 4) intimidated Stacie, and reduced her opportunities for input and interaction.
I’m bad at being able to use it especially in front of other Americans being in front of Americans I’m afraid of being wrong afraid that I will get more scorn for speaking that Bosnian than for speaking English. at least if I’m speaking English I’ll know what is going on when I speak in Bosnian they will laugh at me for trying (seems like from context that could be the Americans laughing) (Stacie, Bosnia, field interview 2012)

The Americans she is afraid to speak in front of are probably those who have a much wider repertoire of Serbo-Croatian. As a consequence, Stacie said she will speak only with taxidrivers or clerks when other Americans are not present. With them she will try to speak Serbo-Croatian as much as possible. However her desire to practice the language seems less than her desire to appear competent or not be laughed at.

when I know a student speaks English or knows a waiter speaks English I will use that as an excuse to not have to speak Bosnian. (Stacie, Bosnia, field interview 2012)

Tom, a teammate of hers, “hated language learning cause I felt like I had no need for Bosnian. Coming over for just one year, I felt like a year wasn’t worth it [to learn the language]”. He decided to return for a second year, but in a mixed level language class, where he had already fallen behind, he reasoned again in his second year, “I’m going to be leaving in June, so I just gave up, it felt impossible, not worth it”. The leader of the Sprint team in Slovenia also told Kristin that “the team- it was really hard for them to be focused on language learning, especially toward the end of the year. They were like ‘we’re not going to use this again’. Especially those were going back to the states”. The language learning classes I observed with the Sprint teams in Bosnia and in Slovenia revealed that Sprinters showed little motivation. The Sprinters were mostly trying to make jokes, recruit
solidarity from the teammates, and make the learning time as fun as they could. Although a fun learning time and an effective learning time are not mutually exclusive, overall the amount of English-language joking made it very difficult for the instructors to accomplish anything, which reduced the level of helpful negotiated, comprehensible input available to the learners.

When I interviewed International Staff at StepOut, they said they did not want to do language with incoming Sprinters, because “they are not focused on it as much”. Mary, in charge of language acquisition training at StepOut, in fact conducted a survey of Sprinters and language attitudes. She found that although the majority of Sprinters had good team relationships, and “a heart for the people and culture”, Sprinters felt like emphasizing language learning “will hinder their ministry. Ministry is effective without learning the local language” and “it is easier for Sprinters to use English, so we (Love the World) need quick wins in language to help Sprinters with attitude problems”. “Quick wins” seems to refer to language learning experiences where Sprinters feel like they are able to acquire and subsequently use some sort of highly truncated repertoire in the host language. Mastery over a small and useable set of the language would theoretically engender motivation for acquiring larger and more complex repertoires. The survey showed that there was also no correlation between having a good, emotionally healthy team situation and having a good attitude towards language proficiency.

Because Sprinters have no training in language acquisition, and there is little guidance for and even less control over the quality of their language acquisition choices, aptitude emerges as a major variable. Sprinters who enjoy and furtively learn the language are acknowledged to be more likely to return for long-term service. Those who return are
further ahead in terms of proficiency than their colleagues who have low motivation and aptitude, and the proficiency differential can engender more jealousy and discouragement as International Staff. In summary, after completing the Sprint, Sprinters tend to:

- Have heard that language learning is not important because “Everyone speaks English”
- View language learning as an important distraction from “doing ministry”
- Have little experience with and doubt the effectiveness of pre-field language acquisition
- Turn to local tutors and classes which use de-motivating methodologies
- Study together with other Sprinters, but this mixed-proficiency instruction induces boredom, comparison and hopelessness
- Have formed the habit that language is not essential, and that you can get by with English

Some basic language acquisition training, or pre-field learning might go some of the way to solving this problem. The language acquisition training at StepOut is seen as too little, too late. Julie, after learning about the GPA at StepOut, recommended that Sprinters should get training in that method from the very beginning. She said she found it too hard to implement the GPA when she was “already at 25-30%”, having already formed her habits in acquiring the first stages of proficiency. She judges it would be much easier if Sprinters were equipped at the beginning and this would foreclose the development of some of the patterns observed above.

8.4 LEARNERHOOD AT STEPOUT

Learners arrive at StepOut with an already formed sense of second language learnerhood, as a result of their academic, short-term and Sprinting experiences. This
learnerhood not only encompasses ideas about *how* to learn the language, but also *why* learning the language is important, and what their attempts to use it “mean” indexically.

### 8.4.1 Learnerhood revealed through metaphors at StepOut

Metaphors are one technique used by these narrators to create moral spaces and to build coherence in the narrative. As Keller-Cohen & Gordon (2003) show, coherence is interactionally situated, so shared metaphors can facilitate comprehension and alignment. The metaphors are mostly positive in my narrative data from StepOut interviews, especially metaphors which resonate with overarching Biblical metaphors which structure all aspects of evangelicals’ lives. These metaphors are also useful for constructing “imaginary proficiency”, representations of oneself as a competent speaker, finished with the language acquisition project. In many of the metaphors used by learners, they transcend the constraints of a truncated repertoire, and embody a newly imagined identity as an adopted “national”.

Smith (2000) wrote the seminal work on the intersection of Christian devotion and motivation for second language learning. He notes that the prevailing metaphors for foreign language learning for Christians are “gift” “service” and “bridge”. My participants, who were consciously attempting to learn the language in order to alter the moral landscape of their target communities from within are well aware of the moral import of their language and negotiate that freely. Also, based on how I was introduced, the participants of my interviews could assume that I shared the same set of evangelical metaphors. The following metaphors among others occurred in the narratives, and are all used in the Bible to describe Christian devotional life as well:

A race or journey with a purpose:
[we need to keep that motivation] **in front of us**
to make sure we **continue to push on** in our language learning
otherwise, we’ll **just slip back** and say ‘alright, we know enough’,
I can see that happening pretty easily,
so yeah
for
I think we’ll
as long as we **keep the goal in front of us**
(Darren, Country W, StepOut 2010)

I feel like when we
**take a step forward**
to learn to speak the language
in the country where we are
it communicates to the community
that we value their language
(Anelisa, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

A witness/testimony:

it’s just **such a witness**,  
really the only people who, 
Americans, who speak Slovak in the country are Christians, 
and so, 
it’s just a really **big testimony** ah, for, 
For 
believer.. 
Christians.. 
Slovak Christians to see me speaking and trying to speak Slovak 
(Jacob, Slovakia, StepOut 2010).

A gift:

like to them that was a **big**
That was a **big thing**
that we were taking the time to learn the language 
(Anelisa, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

Not all metaphors are positive however. One of the most common negative metaphors for
foreign languages is that of a concrete object impeding movement:

**get tired of running into that roadblock** with like the language 
(Joshua, Hungary, field interview, 2012)

Language is **one more barrier**
There are enough barriers to Bosnians, without the barrier of a foreign language  
(Mark, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

[Language learners] have to wrestle with it when there’s all sorts of different communication errors of things they either don’t understand or concepts that they don’t have, so it’s it’s a huge thing and so if you can speak their language, that just I think in a lot of ways reduces their barrier?  
(Todd, Country X, StepOut 2010).

I’m extroverted and I want to know people, so language is a big barrier kind of an enemy I don’t want it to be my enemy  
(Jacob, Slovakia, StepOut 2010)

David Smith in a 2003 article on guests and foreign language learning, relates the often used metaphor of the “language barrier” to instances he has observed in Europe where “tourists” were left on the outside of an actual barrier because of their lack of language proficiency, while those tourists proficient in the language were re-framed as being “guests”. He observes that “Tourists are often courteously but firmly shut out of the human heart of the culture they are visiting. They are left observing distantly and dispassionately from behind a barrier” (Smith 2003:5). Recall from 3.1.2, the relational guest/host metaphor is the main overarching metaphor within Love the World’s learnerhood. Barriers keep out tourists and other “global visitors”, but are opened to admit “local guests”. Thus the language barrier is Jacob’s biggest enemy, because it precludes him from being a guest, from being re-scaled as a “national” and he feels left being a “foreign visitor”. Finally, Smith also connects this barrier with “participation”, the concept
most frequently repeated in the StepOut training of the GPA.

Learning the language of the country where we were guests, and coming with a desire to connect and to listen, allowed us to participate at some level from the start, instead of standing outside the barrier. Not just “let me take your picture”, but “let me stand alongside you and begin to learn”. Not just monuments, but people, with all their hopes and concerns. Not just photos for later, but participation, being present, listening and asking questions in the language of our hosts instead of gesticulating at an usher trying to tell us “no” in every language he knew. (Smith 2003:6)

A metaphor which is not found in the Bible yet seems to be borrowed from discourses on Bible translation within SIL (Besnier 2010) is the “heart language” imagery discussed in Section 4.3.3. This metaphor seems to invoke the image of language residing in the heart of host community members. If the learner has access to language proficiency, he/she then gains immediate access to the heart, the seat of relational intimacy. The “heart language” is the key to the creation of another important metaphor, that of the “open door” (lines 1, 2, 11, 17), which Anelisa struggles to elaborate in this extract.

1 A: it kind of it **opens**
2 it **opens toward** [relationships
3 J: [yeah
4 A: for Bosnians to [trust us
5 J: [mmhmm
6 A: because we DO want to know their culture
7 and we do want to know their
8 language and um
9 so
10 so
11 it **opens doors**
12 because you can you can speak to the people
13 so I feel like it’s just a huge part of being involved
14 in people’s daily lives and
15 and
16 being **open**
17 **open doors** in relationships
18 with
19 with local Bosnians
(Jack and Anelisa, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)
The hedging (lines 1, 13) and reformulations (lines 2, 9, 10,17, 19) indicate that Anelisa feels the “open door” metaphor which she is creating may be going too far, or hard to understand, but it is a metaphor that she sticks with throughout the rest of that interview.

In their shared ideology, “hearts” seem to be guarded, with a closed door, the kind of “barrier” alluded to in the metaphors above. Language proficiency overcomes this barrier of a closed heart-door, and creates an open door through which learners gain full access to the intimate though-worlds of the target language speakers. These narrators’ acts of language learning have the social meanings of open door, gift, or testimony precisely because they upend the political economy of the target languages, as mentioned in Section 7.5. One narrative which illustrates many of these metaphors at once is Erica’s favorable comparison of her interactions with Macedonians as an intermediate-level Macedonian speaker to the other Americans on her team, Sprinters who thought it was unnecessary to learn Macedonian, as “everyone speaks English.”

1 I just noticed the difference
2 for some of the other Americans on my team
3 in Macedonia
4 who didn’t know anything
5 and people like them {rising, hesitant intonation}
6 and “we’re friends” {rising, hesitant intonation}
7 but even
8 seeing how they treated me
9 that they would invite me
10 their level of comfort
11 that they can speak Macedonian
12 it was that much more meaningful for our friendship

(Erica, Slovenia, StepOut, 2011)

Erica aggregates her experiences in Macedonia, and her noticeable advantage in Macedonian proficiency over her colleagues (line 4) was an open door, which removed the barrier, leading to participation (lines 8-10) and the way to the heart (line 12) instead of
just friendship (lines 5-6) which is all that is possible for the other Americans. The “meaningfulness” in the friendship is a kind of “gift” for the Macedonians.

Bryan Meadows (2010) links membership in an imagined community to the advantages in accessing economic resources that come with language proficiency. As shown in Section 7.5.2, host nationals doubt the advantages for English speakers of learning their languages, and these speakers are hesitantly depicted as having linguistic insecurity about their languages ability to compete in a Bourdieusian linguistic marketplace (Bourdieu 1991, DeCosta 2010).

And [Bosnians] would say “you speak English! Why would you need to know Bosnian? You’re not going to be able to use this anywhere else in the world, only in this you know one country. Why would you why would you spend your time to learn this language?” (Mark, Bosnia, StepOut 2010).

This extract not only reveals the linguistic insecurity of Bosnians, but reveals the one language, one country ideology which was a hallmark of 19th and 20th century nationalism. The language Mark is learning is in fact the official language of four countries, not one. But the Bosnians view the “Bosnian language” as separate from the Croatian or Serbian languages, and thus, it is only useful “in this one country”. In Mark’s narrative, the nationalist policy to treat “Bosnian” as a separate language actually reduces the linguistic security or perceived usefulness of their language for Serbo-Croatian speakers. A Bosnian student who I interviewed however, said that the language was spoken by 11 million people, a number which would encompass the speakers in all four countries. So Mark’s “one country” comment, which he attributes to Bosnians, may be a product of his own language ideology. An extract which illustrates linguistic insecurity in another setting comes from Jacob in Slovakia.
And [a Slovak] was like “why are you learning Slovak?”
because there’s only 5 million Slovak speakers in the world
and
in the business world,
it’s a pointless language to learn,

um
because
ah or
at least in the Slovak eyes because
money is English
English is money
and so they have no idea
there’s
there’s not very much business to be had in Slovakia
so they have no idea why
(Jacob, Slovakia, StepOut 2010).

In Jacob’s view through “Slovak’s eyes” (line 9), there is no economic advantage to be
gained from Slovak proficiency (lines 4-5, 14), and great economic advantage with
English (lines 10-11) Jacob can construct his act of Slovak learning as a gift.

it’s just such a witness,
really the only people who,
Americans, who speak Slovak in the country are Christians,

um, the
there’s US Steel like Pittsburgh Steel companies in [city]
and none of them speak English
all the Americans
none of them speak
err none of them speak
err speak SLOVAK,
uh,
and so,
it’s just a really big testimony
(Jacob, Slovakia, StepOut 2010)

Slovak learning is a gift which secular American businessmen (lines 20-22) are unwilling
to give. Learning the language is then purely “altruistic” (lines 16, 28), as opposed to
instrumental, for Jacob. This echoes Amelia’s comments about “other professions” in line
21 of the excerpt presented in Section 4.6.3. In these narratives a strong ideological chain
emerges from language \(\rightarrow\) culture \(\rightarrow\) interpersonal relationship. In the following exchange, Anelisa and Mark explicitly make this link twice (lines 2, 3, 5 and lines 9-12).

1. A: it communicates to the community
2. that we value their language
3. and we value their culture
4. and so it it um
5. J: makes them want to get to know us
6. A: it kind of it opens
7. it opens toward [relationships
8. J: [yeah
9. A: for Bosnians to [trust us
10. J: [mmhmm
11. A: because we DO want to know their culture
12. and we do want to know their language

(Anelisa and Jack, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

Kathleen narrates a markedly similar procession from language knowledge to cultural knowledge to interpersonal knowledge (lines 1-3) in her conversation with an imagined Italian. As Kathleen moves along this chain she moves from positioning the Italian as a 2\textsuperscript{nd} person “you” (lines 1-3) to positioning them as an inclusive 1\textsuperscript{st} person plural “let’s” (line 5)

1. like that your language is important to me,
2. your culture is important to me,
3. you’re important to me and I want to learn about you,
4. I think that’s the point where you go,
5. let’s go deeper and let’s speak in your language.

(Kathleen, Italy, StepOut 2010)

8.4.2 Beliefs about pre-field acquisition expressed at StepOut

In Section 8.3 I described how, as a result of their Sprint experiences, my participants generally express skepticism about pre-field language acquisition. This skepticism expressed in the following extract from Mark, gets reinforced by the organizational hurdles (lines 7, 10) that must be jumped through in order for a highly-motivated Swinger (lines 2-3) to return long term as International Staff. Mark explains how this process tends to de-emphasize language learning.
let’s put it this way
you go on Sprint
you want to move back overseas
so you
that’s like a two-year process
especially if you’re not on staff (in the United States already)
they want you to be in the States for two years
there’s thought of changing that
so it could be more quick
you’ve got to raise support
and that’s like three years
and that one year of language learning
(assuming one-year of immersion before beginning “ministry” projects)
to have four years
from the time that you said you wanted to go
to actually get there...
I think that that’s what makes it a hard thing to do
in Love the World
or why they haven’t done it
(Mark, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

Because pre-field language acquisition is seen as unworkable (lines 16-19), StepOut becomes the next time, after finishing their Sprint internships, and spending three years to prepare again to head back overseas, that new International Staff seriously turn their attention to language learning. The language proficiency acquired on Sprint suffers attrition during the long process of MPD, joining staff, and preparing for their move. Participants seemed to not try, or not know what to try, to keep using their target language, keeping it active while in the United States waiting to return.

8.4.3 Positive evaluations of the GPA at StepOut

At StepOut participants are introduced to a method they could have been using that whole time, the GPA, and many of them are very favorable disposed towards it. When asked at StepOut to explain how they planned to learn the language, almost all included their understanding of the GPA as part of their plan. All the following extracts were collected at StepOut.
I really like that they do not teach you any rules they do not start off teaching you any grammar just matching pictures with words
(Kathleen, Italy, StepOut 2010)

I kind of think that
my goals is that “growth participation model”
is to get through the 1A before we leave.
(Tara, Hungary, StepOut 2010)

I’m excited about that idea (using the GPA)
we did not do it before,
but I’m excited about that idea
and I think it would help a lot
(A nelisa, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

[knowing the GPA] would have been so helpful
to know how to structure your language time!
(Jack, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

I’m tryin’ to keep really positive attitude
and go with a tutor
someone that is on board with doing some of these participatory sessions
kind of really working
(Amelia, Hungary, StepOut 2011)

I’d like some kind of balance between growth participator approach
and going through a language book
because I am a very visual learner
so I like books and seeing things written
and I wanna know grammar well
the grammar part I think is so important
I guess it is in any language
but um
I want to speak well
I do not like the idea of like learning by just failing all the time
but I like this growth participator method too
We’ve been talking about
(Amber, Slovakia, StepOut 2010)

Both Amelia’s and Julie’s language learning plans used terminology copied almost verbatim from the four dimensions of the GPA, and showed that StepOut was effective in shaping her plans for language acquisition.
### Table 8.1: Sample Language learning plans submitted at StepOut 2011

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Learning Plan—Amelia 7/2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communing:</strong> 3 days/week; 2 hrs./day –with nurturer in Growth Zone, supercharged participation sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 hr. / week; 2 current contacts; --interacting with them in Growth Zone and supercharged sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding:</strong> 1-2hrs. OFF DAYS: Listening to language sessions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Follow a Hungarian TV show (Cartoon) as a family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talking:</strong> Concentrate on Awareness of Growth Zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Have at least 5 conversations daily with nationals operating in my Growth Zone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-Attend student/staff meetings and seek out opportunities in Hungarian in my GZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evolving/Redemptive:</strong> Functional Goals: Order meat at a deli, Fruit and Vegetables at Market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning about others: Focusing on language elements that involve family and faith questions that increase my ability to converse in Hungarian in these. Set measurable goals in both family, and faith language.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Learning Plan—Julie 7/2011</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communing:</strong> 5 hrs per week interacting with host people in my growth zone (on top of 20 hrs a week of class and 10 of homework)- need to find a nurturer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Listening:</strong> 5 hrs a week doing supplementary listening (mostly church and Swedish kids movies to start), with 60 words a week added to my iceberg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Talking:</strong> practice speaking with students and in team settings; Supercharged participation activities- telling stories and describing books/cartoons</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Evolving/Redemption:</strong> can celebrate that I remember a lot already, can grow in listening better</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As I indicated in Chapter 6, neither of these learners ended up using the GPA once they arrived in the field, although all said that they planned to use it. Below I address additional complicating factors who mitigated against the use of GPA and acquiring fluency in field workers’ idealized truncated repertoires.

### 8.5 Learnerhood on Arrival

After finishing StepOut, participants acknowledge that they have to focus on other aspects of preparation, and language learning gets lost in the shuffle. Jack in the following excerpt of his interview at StepOut, anticipated that language will again become the...
“highest priority” (line 26) once he and his wife arrive mentally, as much as geographically, on “the other side of the Atlantic” (line 25).

1 language is like the lowest priority of all the other things we have to do
2 umm
3 you know above language is paperwork
4 above paperwork is umm
5 probably working out team issues
6 you know
7 relationships on our team
8 above that is probably umm
9 shipping umm
10 and moving
11 our possessions
12 you know
13 figuring out what to take
14 and what to SHIP
15 and how to SHIP it
16 and umm
17 that kind of stuff
18 and then
19 after that is these training things like this conference
20 then more important than that is probably working on our marriage
21 and family
22 and our relationship with each other
23 and then you know our relationship with the lord
24 probably the most important
25 thing above that
26 so
27 I mean
28 I haven’t thought about that much
29 but uhh that’s
30 on the other side of the Atlantic, uhh
31 language is going to be like the highest priority on that list
   (Jack, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

Jack, a generally slow talker, exaggerates the repetitiveness of time-consuming tasks on the American side of the Atlantic through “umms” (lines 2, 4, 6, 9, 16), pausing after short turns (lines 9-18), and frequent use of “and” to start turns (10,14-16, 21-23). Lines (30-31) were spoken much faster and at a higher pitch, enacting the accelerated pace of learning. “On the other side of the Atlantic” however, language learning often does not become the
highest priority. Not only due to a lack of understanding, but also a lack of time and energy, do these learners leave their language plans unimplemented.

Although arrival should happen in the fall immediately following StepOut, many of my participants had not finished collecting the required financial support by the time the fall came, and had to wait until spring or even the following year before heading overseas. Another complicating factor was receiving the visas. For instance, the field workers being sent to Slovenia, although having received their financial support, did not receive their visas until the spring, arrive in April. The upshot of all this is that instead of serving as a site for socialization and preparation immediately before heading overseas, it was more common in my sample population for StepOut to occur after a year of habit-forming and socialization from other personnel at the field sites had occurred, or for StepOut to occur so far ahead of their arrival in the field, that the materials presented there were barely remembered, and learners leaned more heavily on personally-originating folk methods of language acquisition which they had employed in the intervening months.

Michael read an article at StepOut presenting an ideal situation for language learners using the GPA and how much more proficient a GPA test group was than a control group of traditional learners in Costa Rica. These learners, in a controlled and protected environment faced very different circumstances than Michael and Sara, who had to find their own apartment with a newborn baby.

That’s true that that method (the GPA) is effective… but the problem with that is [model GPA learners presented in an article] probably had their homes set up for them, and everything was established for them… so it’s easy (in such scenarios) to go into the country and learn a full-time… learning language if you are able to do…. But as an International Staff, you’ve got to go, and get an apartment, figure out where the stores are, you figure how to survive. A lot of time is spent you know… you (Love the World workers) do not have the ability to…. It got to be too much. We
lived in a basement before we could find our own place. Once we got it, it was empty except for the sink, so we had to buy furniture. It was so stressful with a baby, we were sick from living in a basement and from the stress, [our city] is chaotic. We felt like two year olds figuring out where to buy things. Yeah, language did not really happen. (Michael, Italy, field interview, 2012)

Michael is a highly-motivated learner who has made great strides in Italian proficiency, and I observed him interacting for over an hour in Italian, making himself understood, and constantly being intentional about negotiating new forms and asking metalinguistic questions to his interlocutors. Yet his inclination to use the GPA after StepOut in 2011 met resistance in the stress of life circumstances and from the leadership in Italy.

According to his wife Sara, in Italy the local leaders like Donna and Martina said they needed people to use a language learning methodology which is “something measurable”. Sara felt that new field workers “using the GPA are unmotivated in using GPA- when people do a tutored class, the work is done for them, and they (local leaders) do not really know what the GPA is”. Sara felt discouraged in her first year because she couldn’t take a class while having a kid. When she was exposed to the GPA at StepOut, Sara immediately recognized the method as something possible for a mom in a new country to use. But the local leaders said it hadn’t been done well, and so they were skeptical of it. Interestingly, Donna, a senior field worker in their city, positioned Sara as someone who tried the GPA and figured out that it did not work. But Sara’s actual perspective was that she really wanted to implement the GPA more fully, but felt that the local culture of learning Italian, and especially senior Love the World field workers, like Donna, were discouraging its use. As a result she hasn’t taken a formal class; instead, she contracted an academic tutor who she “was paying more than what it is worth”. Sara loves
Rosetta Stone, and wants to continue informal conversations in the park, but feels like she is “falling behind in language”.

Faced with the burden of adjusting, the least daunting language learning option is to turn to a method that requires no work or preparation, especially if a newly arrived field worker feels unsure about what methods work best. I observed Erica and Kristin in their first week of arriving on the field in Slovenia. Both of them, when weighing out language options, gravitated towards language schools. They hoped to use a tutor as well, and remembered the iceberg principle as well as the concept of using a picture to elicit host language conversation. From their questions that week, and from the subsequent reports on progress that have been sent out to their supporters, it is clear that they relied heavily on a professional language school for acquisition, a school recommended by other field workers with different organizations in that same city. They did less language work with communicative tutors, outside of the intensive academic program, than they had at first thought. That school did cause them frustrations however, and both Erica and Kristin turned to me for advice on how to make the school setting more effective, and how to be less frustrated with it. Many of the students in the school had gotten EU funding to learn Slovene, but weren’t highly motivated to speak it. Erica and Kristin expressed they may have been more comfortable to try the GPA if there had been a helper on the ground who was well trained in the GPA and available to meet for several hours a day. As both had used academic textbooks and made flashcards before arriving in Slovenia, it was natural for them to turn to academic methods in their uncertainty.

8.6 Learnerhood as developing field workers
As International Staff progress in their time in the field, most of the themes I described in Chapter 6 emerge. After the initial priority year(s) of language learning have finished, the two themes which emerge are those of a competition between “ministry” and “language learning” and the struggle to find “investment” in the host language.

8.6.1 “Doing ministry”, “doing language” and “other stuff”

The phrase “doing ministry” has already appeared in several extracts in this dissertation. Mary’s primary goal for the StepOut program was that International Staff would see that ministry and language learning are not in a kind of zero sum competition. The articles she chose, and her attraction to the GPA were in service of this larger goal. The pressures are immense however, however, to report ministry progress to supporters, to national and regional leaders, and to their own sense of success. As time goes on, Field workers feel more of a need to “do ministry” with tangible results, and participants experience this as a distraction from or competitor for language acquisition. Adam, after a year of “language priority time” says that:

1 what I REALLY want to do is meet with students
2 but instead I have to be working on Swedish
3 intellectually I know Swedish is important
4 but it’s not where my heart is
5 or how I want to be spending time.
6 when I think ministry
7 I think ‘service, discipleship.’
8 All this other stuff [team activities, language learning]
9 I’m kind of like ‘What is that?’
10 But I see I guess why it’s good.
(Adam, Sweden, field interaction 2012)

Adam clearly sets up a dichotomy between “ministry” (line 6) on the one hand and “working on Swedish” (line 2) or “other stuff” (line 8) on the other. Weekly schedules are filled up with far more English-mediated activities (meeting with Sprinters, contacting the
regional headquarters, communicating with supporters back home, teaching English classes, attending and serving at international churches, conversations with spouses and children) than they expected. As Julie, noted “meeting with Sprinters takes a LOT of time”. It is not uncommon for workers to find themselves speaking, reading or writing in the host language fewer than ten hours a week. From context, this is the “other stuff” to which Adam is referring.

“Meeting with students” (line 1), “service, discipleship” (line 7) are “where his heart is” (line 4). Even though those activities definitely require language, I observed Adam do these activities in a natural mix of English and Swedish. “Working on Swedish” is apparently decontextualized from other relationships, and included for him going to government classes, reviewing flash cards, speaking in Swedish with Julie, and studying textbooks. This dichotomy is antithetical to the GPA and sociocultural methods, as well as Brewster & Brewster’s article which Adam read at StepOut. He has to “intellectually” (line 3) reason himself into working on Swedish (line 10) despite his gut-level negative reaction (line 9). Presumably, Adam reasons that the Swedes’ “heart language” is more valuable than his own “heart” (line 4), so he tolerates the “other stuff” he sees as competing for time with “ministry”.

I have already discussed in the case of Adam how “doing ministry” can compete with “doing language”. Love the World is perceived by members of other organizations as a group of “doers”, highly driven, type-A personalities. While it is impossible to determine objectively if this is true, my participants often complain of having to accomplish so many things, especially being in leadership roles, that it erodes their time for language learning. Mark mentions one instance of team duties taking away from
language.

Also through that time (fall 2011) we were having a lot of team meanings because our long term team was preparing for the new year and making a lot of decisions, and that was all in English… that was the worst time, it was going that far I began to see the competition between language and team activities. (Mark, Bosnia, field interview 2012)

Mark comments that in the team he oversees feels that “ministry is more fun than grammar so [they] end up not doing [grammar]”.

Laverne explained her lack of time to do language by saying “also this spring and summer I took on accounting for the team, and that replaced language learning”, adding “we got pulled in because work was growing and we were needed. Other organizations are really strict, you have two years where you do not do anything but language”. Erica reported to her supporters that for her as well accounting duties were detracting from her time.

Between language study, working on the office, learning how to do the finances for our organization, and making new friends, I have kept quite busy. Please pray for me though, as the learning curve is steep and it can be pretty stressful at times- especially with the finances and learning to navigate all the bureaucracy that goes with it. (Erica, support letter, 2012)

The finances are urgent and have to get done. Language learning is, in Mark’s words, “important but not urgent” so it may be the first thing to go, the easiest thing to delay.

Mentoring Sprinters is particularly time consuming. Since “leadership development” is a top priority for Love the World, International Staff who serve in a city also housing a team of Sprint interns, are doubly tasked. Their schedule must accommodate one-on-one meetings, trainings, and programs designed to help the Sprinters grow. Jacob views the Sprinters as helpful, but “extremely inefficient. For them to do anything, especially something like planning a retreat, takes so much longer than a national. Everything is harder without language, knowhow, contacts”. Because Sprinters
so often need help, and because various problems can arise both professionally and personally, with very young people, in their early twenties, living in an intimate team away from home for the first time, troubleshooting can take the priority over language. A Sprint team presents International Staff with ready-made community of English-speaking, similar-background people, with who it is easier to interact socially than with host nationals.

8.6.2 Investment in the host language

“Investment”, yet another metaphor hast to do with the social capital (Bourdieu 1991) that a learner can expect to gain by participation in language learning (Norton Pierce 1995). Investment in the host culture and language has become a significant line of SLA research (Norton 2005, 2008), with Norton & McKinney (2011) advocating for investment to replace motivation as a construct in SLA research. Investment refers to the learner’s sense that an identity claim is at stake in the learning process. DeCosta notes that “learners in the SLA identity literature are seen as partaking in imagined communities; in particular, their language learning experiences have been characterized by varying levels of investment (Norton-Peirce 1995, Norton 2001, Kanno & Norton 2003) in these imagined communities” (DeCosta 2010:775). Indeed, one of the investment issues that affects both Sprinters and International Staff is the notion of “citizenship” and immigration status. In some countries, Love the World does not yet have official NGO status, and so is unable to directly issue visas. In other countries where there is official status, the visa renewal process can be very time consuming, requiring large amounts of
Several of my participants were in a constant back-and-forth over their immigration status, and many Sprinters, unable to get long-term visas, had to keep shuttling in and out of the Schengen visa-free travel zone, interrupting their various projects and scheduling, in order to keep renewing their tourist visas.

Jack said “some field workers say we are like immigrants, but {adamantly} we are NOT immigrants, it’s not at all for us what it’s like for them (people who move to the US and need to learn English). THEY come and even start speaking English in their HOME”. Jack contrasted the fact that immigrants to the US even try to speak English at home with the fact that Christian field workers often do not even try to speak the host language in public, or make all the host nationals carry on a conversation in English. Jack’s view that immigrants MUST learn English is rooted in US language policies which tend to erase multilingualism, especially in the public space. In his field site however, English plays a prominent role in the public linguistic landscape, even though English has no official status. Jack’s model of immigrants who start speaking English even at home points to a model of European immigration from the 19th century, the “Melting Pot” age, and thus is a “pre-globalization” conception of immigrants. He ignores the existence of “transnational immigrants” who do not learn the host language and maintain strong connections with their countries of origin, moving back and forth. Even the 19th century European immigrants to America probably only acquired truncated repertoires in their first generation, very similar to the kind of repertoire which Jack himself possesses in Serbo-Croatian- proficient at some communicative tasks, limited in others.

A common complaint is that even in cities where almost the whole population speaks English, English speakers are nowhere to be found in the visa and immigration offices.
Adam and Julie in Sweden agreed that as English speakers living abroad, their experience was different from non-English speaking immigrants to the US. Julie also evokes a pre-globalization model of immigration by wondering, “The Swedish immigrants in Minnesota... How they must have thought of themselves? Americans of Swedish background, not Swedes living in America!” Julie sensed an important mental difference between thinking of herself as an “American living in Sweden” as opposed to a “Swede with an American background”. She thought that the latter mentality was the one she ought to adopt. Adam and Julie recognized they did not have the same incentive to transfer their “mental citizenship” and commit fully to being Swedish, as the Minnesotan immigrants had committed to being American. Both mentioned that technology works strongly against this way of thinking; they can nurture their links to America via Facebook, and their membership in Love the World tethers them strongly to the USA.

Lucy in Sweden also distinguished her experience from that of the “true migrants”. On arriving to the orientation for the government course remarked “there are not many people of European descent here. I feel out of place”. Indeed, the Swedish SFE course seemed geared toward migrants from the Middle East and Asia, migrants who felt a real need to acquire Swedish as a more prestigious language than Farsi or Dari in the Swedish context. But as native English speakers, American field workers even felt from Swedes that English was more powerful and prestigious than Swedish; the Swedes naturally defaulted to English in conversation in a way they wouldn’t default to the Farsi spoken by “true immigrants”. In the European context, the processes of globalization produce a stereotypical figure of transnational migrant, racialized, non-Christian (particularly
Muslim), from the global South. Love the World field workers do not fit this stereotype in their own eyes or in the eyes of those they work worth.

One big frustration, which impedes learners’ investment, is that English plays a far larger role in most people’s lives than expected. Host nationals’ English proficiency is high, and their investment in English is perceived to be greater than field workers’ investment in the host language. Nick notes that “our students speak English well and they have never travelled abroad to learn a language- they speak just as fluently as I do after 5 years, after 6 months. They’re FORCED {contrastive emphasis} to use it”. The perceived rewards for a student to use English are higher than those for a field worker to use the host language.

The implication of these observations is that investment in the host language is inhibited by the fact that English is more competitive in a Bourdieusian linguistic marketplace. There is more an “uphill battle” for learners to force themselves to use the host language. Celine in Georgia, noted how comfortable it felt to speak English with Georgians, and how taxing it was to try to formulate Georgian sentences. Thus code choice is described in terms of effort. Because the Georgians she interacts with speak such good English, and because she knows many expats, “enough America is provided that the cost of exposure (to Georgian input) feels high”.

Mark is an example of someone who did exhibit strong investment in the host language. Mark narrated several examples over the course of my field visit of instances where it clearly continued to be very meaningful to locals that he and his wife, as Americans, spoke the national language. His wife dropped off documents at a local Catholic school where she was enrolling their eldest child, and the school director, despite
having clear documentation that they were Americans with no local connections, Theresa was able to impress her by conducting all the official business in the national language, even using Croatian variants where appropriate.

Mark was also able to conduct an entire university lecture in the national language, on the history of their own city, which visibly excited the students and the hosting professor. This lecture provided an example of the awareness of how different ways of speaking, such as lecturing from notes, get packaged in the local context, and carry a different indexical value in the Bosnian context than they would in America. This awareness of situated indexicality and register choice become part of learnerhood as a field worker’s communicative competence develops. Since communicative competence is situated and emergent (Kataoka et al. 2013), the lecture experience became formational in both Mark’s and the Bosnian class’ notions of what competence can mean for an American learner.

Through observations gained from his affiliations with or “apprenticeship” into the Bosnian academic community (line 13, below), Mark decided to speak extemporaneously, exercising on-line production, rather than from prepared notes, off-line production (Foster & Skehan 1996). Although he could have spoken with greater formal accuracy, and used more academically indexicalized vocabulary if he had spoken from notes, he decided against it, in the name of authenticity. This authenticity can be analyzed in Thomson’s terms as “growing participation” or in Bourdieu’s terms as accruing “linguistic capital”.

This theme of extemporaneity got reintroduced the next day when I asked if it would help him in his language learning to pre-prepare his lessons at a local church in Serbo-Croatian.
1. M: I’m thinking
2. as far as the speaking skills
3. a skill that I think is very appreciated here
4. is being able to extemporaneously speak
5. whereas I would have to prepare more of the texts
6. and I wouldn’t feel as comfortable to do that
7. I: it wouldn’t be as good of practice for extemporaneous speaking?
8. M: and I think it wouldn’t be as high of a value connection-wise.
9. it’s a high-value here
10. it feels more legitimate
11. and real
12. if you aren’t reading from notes
13. that’s something I have picked up on in this culture
   (Mark, Bosnia, field interview 2012)

Locally-circulating language learning methodologies, described in Section 7.5, which are rooted in grammar-translation approach, focus heavily on formal accuracy, standard variants and academic register. As he gained increasingly legitimacy in his host culture participation, Mark had observed that despite this pedagogical tradition, culturally the most appropriate way to speak is extemporaneously, “from the heart”, even at a university or church lecture. The acquisition of these discourse and register cues is a more advanced stage in learning, and sociocultural methodologies would certainly value these sorts of “using language appropriately”, perhaps even more than the formal morphological accuracy of -$/-te (discussed in Section 5.3.4) or the case ending paradigms (illustrated in Figure 7.1) that he practices in his tutoring sessions.

Mark further describes how his own approach to language learning matured after two years in the field.

1 in some ways here are some things I’ve realized lately
2 with morale of coming on our team
3 maybe this is a philosophical language thing
4 but although I’m not giving up my pursuit of getting better in Bosnian
5 I do not feel the same need I did at the beginning to be perfect in Bosnian
6 in fact by not being perfect
7 it makes sure there is a reason to have nationals to come work for us.
there is space in some way
my goal is to be able to do all my job in Bosnian.
I think before maybe at
I still agree with what I was staying before
of me not being perfect in Bosnian creates space
like my job is to facilitate students
and eventually Bosnian staff to do my job
(Mark, Bosnia, field interview, 2012)

Mark alludes to the fact that his ultimate goal is for all the Americans to leave, and for Bosnians to “be raised up” to carry on the various projects that the Americans have started. Whereas right after StepOut, Mark was highly motivated to become fluent, and is indeed proficient enough to lecture at a university, he has “created space”, and realized that his goal is no longer to become a fluent speaker. Disfluencies or communication difficulties created a gap for Bosnians to step in and negotiate meaning, participate meaningfully in shaping the message themselves. He feels that after three years, he is already nearing the point where host nationals stop being impressed at how well he speaks, and start to wonder why he does not speak better, having lived there so long. In the next section I will describe how learnerhood changes once field workers reach that point.

8.7 Learnerhood as longer long term field workers

If field workers stay on past the five-year length which is seen to be typical in the missions and development enterprise, and which is held out as the goal for most of my participants, new issues arise. Several of the older field workers I encountered, especially those who work in the regional office, had been International Staff in a country and seen host nationals get trained to take over their role. Love the World is no longer operated by Americans in Albania\(^5\), Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Macedonia,

\(^5\)Albania actually sends staff to other countries in the region
Ukraine, and many regions of Russia. After ten or fifteen years of service in one locale, field workers were faced with the decision of taking on an administrative role, or moving to a new country to start a new movement. In Hungary, field workers who had moved from Ukraine or Russia felt like learning Russian was “their life’s work”, a feat which could never be replicated. So although they continue to serve Love the World in Budapest, they live in “an English bubble of Budaörs and Diósdl” (expatriate-favored Western suburbs) and show little incentive to learn Hungarian. They may even find occasion to use their Russian in the field office with other staff. The culture at the regional office downplays the importance of Hungarian, which sometimes created tension with Hungarian staff serving in the same city.

Other field workers from Russian speaking areas, under pressure from new Russian policies which have severely curtailed the operations of Western-funded religious and civil society NGOs, are heading to other countries of the former Soviet Union. Although they feel like they should be learning the titular languages of the former Soviet states (such as Armenian or Georgian), their hard-won Russian proficiency is easy for them to fall back on. So much communication can be accomplished in English or Russian, that the felt need to learn languages which are often morphologically complex and very different from English, is insufficient to result in language motivation.

Some field workers remain in their host country, and transition to a non-leadership role, finding their investment in the country too great to pull out. Croatia was fully handed over to Croatian leadership last year, although Croatia still hast most of the field workers who pioneered the work there in the early 1990’s. They live in expatriate heavy suburbs of Zagreb, engaged in other activities outside the organization. Many workers who remain in
the country beyond ten years are described by teammates as having plateaued at an intermediate level of proficiency. Those long-term workers had built a community of people with who their host language proficiency suffices. Jennifer and her husband decided to join and were soon asked to lead an English-speaking international church. Self-described leaders, they see their own roles now as being more in English, less in Slovene, reaching out to other expatriates. However Jennifer freely admits, “now [Slovene proficiency] has become something we really have to have if we’re going to continue in family ministry”.

For workers with strong leader personalities, limited language proficiency could be frustrating, as it precludes you from positions of leadership. One way around this tension would be to find a different ministry role or community where English was used, and the lack of host language proficiency is less of an issue. However, being in such a community would continue to isolate those field workers from immersion in the host language, and progress in acquisition would remain slow. Kristin, after adjusting to life in Ljubljana commented “like I’m really surprised I haven’t met any pastors who tried to learn the language very well… it seems like even the New Zealand pastor from this church, he’s lived in Slovenia for eight years”. She goes on to note that he lived in a smaller town for the first two years and in Ljubljana for six; his Slovene is heavily accented with a New Zealand accent.

When I attended a church service with Kristin and Erica, that pastor did seem to struggle to give the announcements in Slovene, let alone preach. He abandoned speaking Slovene and relied on his Slovene wife to translate basic instructions and church announcements. These examples may act to demotivate and discourage Erica and Kristin
who “feel called” to be there and to learn the language well. Those older examples model that learning the language well is neither a given, nor a necessity. It also illuminates and belies their presupposition that language acquisition will be just a “matter of time” (Section 6.6).

8.8 RELATIONAL ISSUES THAT SHAPE DEVELOPMENT

Trajectories of learnerhood do not form in isolation, with individuals making cognitive decisions about how to best process the various models of learnerhood in their environments. Moving to another country, especially with a family, is a very personal and emotional experience. The fact that my participants are in teams, and many of them are in families, plays a significant role in shaping how learnerhood will develop. In this last section of Chapter 8 I describe several types of relationship, and the effects these relational dynamics have on how to learn and when to try using the host language.

8.8.1 Spousal dynamics

Several relational issues in the field have the power to affect learnerhood, and decisions about when to use the host language. In general singles are seen as being better language learners than married field workers. Astrid, in charge of language learning in Country Z, who had learned the language as a single person, before getting married and having children, explains that singles are able to be more immersed in a language, often living with national roommates, than a married person.

1 I think a lot of [attainment] is also
2 like people life stage
3 people who are single or married
4 that affects peoples language learning
5 affects how immersed you can be
6 or how immersed you are
it’s not the same for everyone,
but it’s a factor I’ve seen affect people
(Astrid, Country Z, field interview 2010)

In an interview at StepOut 2011, Sara, married to Michael, mentioned an article that she had been reading before StepOut. This article put considerable emphasis on the role of the wife’s acquisition in predicting longevity.

it’s really interesting this said the wife
if she does not learn the language
I forget the percentage
it’s really really high
the family will return home in three years
because it brings the family home
if the wife can learn the language
she can become engaged in the ministry
and if you’re like
“this is a place I can call home
have friends”
if not in three years
we’re going to be coming off the field (Sara, Italy, StepOut 2011)

This finding was borne out in discussions with experienced professionals in the field of counseling and de-briefing field workers, such as Steve Sweatman and Dwight Gradin at MTI, and Miriam Jerome at Missionary Resources International. The way the pattern was described by these experts is that the wife of a field worker can feel like she has no role of her own. She must stay at home with the kids while the husband is out on the community, performing worthwhile functions, and getting exposed to a great deal more authentic input. The wife can withdraw and feel isolated from the host culture; when decisions are made about whether to prolong their stay in the field, the wife may advocate for a return to the United States. I certainly did see a bit of this dynamic in my participant population. Mark admitted that Jack was able to make significant progress in language, largely because his wife Anelisa absorbed many of the household responsibilities, making it harder for her to...
find the time to improve. Simon also realized he may have to leave the field soon because of Rachel’s difficulties with language.

In a kind of proficiency trade-off, workers speak as if there are a limited amount of hours in a family which can be devoted to language learning, as child-care and other hours are fixed. A husband and wife must then divvy up among themselves who will get the free hours to learn the language. If the husband is more proficient, the wife can feel insecure. Sara describes her language goals in these terms.

1 the plumber would be coming over to work in the bathroom or something
2 or the Internet guy would be coming in
3 and I’d be like “Michael you’ve got to stay here
4 because I cannot speak to him”
5 so I think (her goal would be)
6 like if there was people who are coming to do work on the place
7 that I would feel comfortable enough
8 that Michael could be gone
9 and I could do the speaking.
10 How about a year from now?
   (Sara, Italy, StepOut 2011)

When I visited Sara and Michael in 2012, these fears of isolation seemed to be coming true. She had little Italian interaction, and few chances to leave the home, as she cared for children all day. As Michael made progress, she noticed increasingly that she was falling behind in proficiency, making her feel less independent and more vulnerable, when her routine departed from the daily tasks whose language requirements she had learned. A similar situation was reported by Amelia about a friend, the wife of a long-term field worker also in Hungary.

1 You know a couple that are my closer friends
2 or the ones that I know
3 one’s a really close friend and it’s been a struggle with her all along
4 her husband you know has worked
5 is virtually bilingual in Hungarian you know
6 so that’s been her situation
7 because he’s been kind of able to
it’s a harder situation for her
and he’s really good on top of that
you know
I think with mom’s
I do not think that there’s as much of that mutual
type of challenges with it
as far as where you wanna be

(Amelia, Hungary, StepOut 2011)

Another interesting area where aptitude, which is downplayed in Love the World and in the GPA, was appealed to was in situations where the husband significantly struggled in language learning. Typically the husband has more interactions with host nationals than the wife, and thus obtains greater language proficiency. But for many couples, wives had a greater language aptitude, or more experience in the host language than their husbands. This led to tensions and insecurities in their marriages as well, with the husbands depending on their wives in a way which controverted their ideologies about leadership. Jennifer said that her husband’s language difficulties were “humbling as a man, because [language] does not come as naturally to him, and he does not seek out the opportunities to use it”. She attributed this to his not wanting to “sound dumb, especially in a society where people really correct you if you say something wrong”. Here she positioned Slovenia as a society where prescriptive correctness was rigidly enforced, at the expense of communication.

For two of the field workers in Country Y, the wives (both childless) had far greater language proficiency, a fact reluctantly admitted by the women and shyly confirmed by the men in the interviews. Stacie was also coy about the fact that she was more proficient than her husband Carter. She minimized this differential by emphasizing her own hesitance to use her language, while Carter was more willing to use his. Jim in Hungary knows that his wife is a more avid and motivated learner. He says:
there are a few like me who just speak English, but I do not think there’s a ton of us. although I’ve not had to find out, it’s probably me and a lot of wives. (Jim, Hungary, field interview 2012)

confirming that generally wives struggle with language while husbands succeed, although that is not his case. Jacob and Brian each have wives whose first language is the host language. This situation also put Jacob and Brian at a paradoxical disadvantage to learning host languages. While Brian had worked hard and made significant progress in Swedish, attempting to use the language at home, Jacob’s marriage was mostly in English, partly as a cause of and partly as a result of his intense struggles to acquire Slovak. Although he had initially wanted to use some Slovak at home, he finally decided:

Do I want to learn how to be married or learn the language? and I chose marriage- it was easy, by the time I got home I did not want to speak more Slovak- I turned language into an enemy- it’s getting that way. (Jacob, Slovakia, Skype interview 2012)

In the spring of 2013, Jacob reported in his letter to supporters that he speaks Slovak with his wife until 8pm every night. As his wife speaks only Slovak to their children, he has a high incentive to learn, and feels defeated by his language progress. Although he stopped using Slovak in order to have a healthier marriage with his wife, ironically his language struggles are a source of tension at times in his marriage and ministry.

8.8.2 Motherhood

The husband and wife dynamic has much to do with child-rearing, and the opportunities for exposure to input that being with children either provides or robs learners of.

1. I guess as a mom
2. I’m wanting to have a really developed plan
3. before I get there
because I know taking in all the other things that are a part of living overseas with two small children it can be just easy to I’ll know this is just another thing (Amelia, Hungary, StepOut 2011)

To some extent going out with a small child can create opportunities for connections. Theresa reports meeting many other mothers at the park, and especially engaging in conversations in Serbo-Croatian while her children were in ballet class. Jim said that his wife Tara is often surrounded by a circle of Hungarian moms, laughing and talking about the language, on the sideline of her children’s’ soccer games. Simon’s wife Rachel reports that her only opportunities to use her language are in the park with other moms while her toddler is playing. Sara, says “having a baby can open up opportunities for Italian, because grandmothers will come up to them on the street and have a five-minute conversation with [my son]. Not with me, but just with the baby. They’ll say ‘troppo’ like ‘troppo bello’ it means ‘too much beautiful.’ they’ll go off on him- it’s really fun”. These interactions tend to be formulaic and limited though at least at first, having the same conversation over and over again.

Recognizing the difficulties of getting input, Love the World’s language policies include far lower expectation for proficiency for mothers. In Country Y, for example, the policy reads “We expect husbands/singles to get through 3 levels of language study in the first 12 months, wives/moms to get through 2 levels”. Not every organization has different standards for mothers. Both Theresa and her husband Mark were amazed at the expectations of another “hard core” agency (line 7) in their city, primarily based on the experiences of one other couple. Using three way repetition Mark and Theresa recruit sympathy for this “sweet” (line 9) couple who “had to” (lines 4, 13) and was “forced”
“study study study” (line 13). This couple “really struggled” (lines 1,2,5) with not being able to see their children; babysitting is seen as a moral problem in this narrative.

Mark and Theresa, Bosnia, StepOut 2010

Theresa appreciated the lack of structure and accountability within Love the World here, which she laments in other narratives, calling it “flex” (line 16) as opposed to “hard core” (line 7) and allowing her to “incorporate language” (lines 18, 22-23) into activities associated with her role of mother.

With older children, mothers also face the dilemma of sending their children to a host language kindergarten, which would free language time, but they would feel cut out from their children’s schooling process. Mark and Theresa enjoyed having their kids speak Serbo-Croatian at a local kindergarten (vrtić). Jennifer had her kids in a kindergarten (vrtec) in Ljubljana at first, but eventually decided to hire a Slovene house helper, with
who she practiced Slovene, and who was the source of most of her interaction and acquisition. In some places international schools are an option, but they are expensive, and associated with the elite, positioning field workers firmly above the middle class and causing host nationals to perceive them as elite. Roger wanted to send his kids to Hungarian schools, but he had to pull them out after two years because he and wife (especially) couldn’t speak Hungarian well enough to communicate with teachers. When his daughter was being bullied, they couldn’t speak Hungarian well enough to intervene. They put their kids in an international school, which further reinforced their sense of isolation from Hungarians and Hungarian input.

Three of the couples I interviewed were seriously considering leaving the field because the wife, a mother of young children, had consistently fallen behind in language acquisition, which fed a vicious cycle of isolation and feelings of uselessness. One wife even confidentially admitted that this felt like “HIS ministry and HIS calling, not mine”. Rachel summarized the frustration of trying to explain to supporters back home what the use is of her being there, “If I go home, what am I going to have to talk about? I do nothing! Umm I just learn the language, and I cannot even really speak it”. Her husband has tried hard, to his credit, to engage her more in the community and language opportunities, but they most likely will return to the United States. Sara was very concerned about her Italian progress as a mom and was unhappy in Italy. She asked me if I heard of ANY moms who learned the language because she hadn’t met any who she could ask for advice on getting input from. “Michael always comes home and says ‘I interacted with Italians’ and I do not have this”. Because many of these women ascribe to the ideal that a wife should stay in the home to raise the children, “motherhood” as they
idealized it, is threatened by a lack of language proficiency, since so many of the domestic
tasks related to child rearing do require host language proficiency. Yet women are cut off
by their roles for access to input and interaction, and so are unable to perform these
domestic tasks. As a result they may feel frustrated even in their role as mothers, and
transfer that negative affect toward their beliefs about the host language. Relational
dynamics, with spouses, children, team duties, and Sprinters can significantly alter the
calculus of how much time is available to spend on language learning, how much input a
learner is exposed to, and how the typical trajectory described in this chapter will evolve.
9. CONSEQUENCES AND APPLICATIONS OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERHOODS

So far I have presented the idea of second language learnerhood and analyzed Love the World workers’ learnerhoods according to theme, scales and trajectories. The analysis of learnerhood which I have presented so far has consequences for the organization, how its workers are perceived, and how its workers perceive their own emerging second language selves. In this chapter, I first present the stories of two atypical learners, Jacob and Lauren, in greater detail. Jacob represents a learner who could potentially benefit from using the GPA, but who felt very ill-equipped to put it to use. Lauren represents a learner who probably would have succeeded in a wide variety of methods, but who felt very equipped to implement the GPA, and alone among my participants used the GPA fully and the GPA alone in her language learning. These learners' stories are instructive for teaching organizations how sociocultural methodologies can be better presented and applied in the field. I next present practical consequences for these field workers brought on by the way that their learnerhood evolves. Finally, I present practical applications for policy makers in Love the World and similar organizations based on the findings of this study.

9.1 ATYPICAL TRAJECTORIES

In this section, I complicate the picture of the “typical trajectories” presented in Chapter 8. With learners of so many different personalities, backgrounds, family situations, and field sites, variation is expected, and no field worker exactly conforms to a typical pattern. Focus on individual case studies is needed to illustrate how individuals
can diverge in interesting ways from what I have abstracted as the “typical” path, and how local realities do come into play. Julie for instance described herself as a very high aptitude learner, who had always had great success in using traditional methods, and whose Swedish accent was nearly flawless. Her plans were thrown into total disarray when she was unable to take traditional four-skills classes and had to pursue language learning on her own. Pete is a Sprinter who learned Italian very well, despite not being encouraged to do so, by hanging out with a group of young men at a local gelateria. Without resorting to books or classes, he acquired a very authentic lower-class, male, regional variety of the language, which contrasted heavily with the formal academic variety acquired by Michelle in order to pass the CILS exams. The themes presented in Chapter 6 are experienced in different ways by different individuals, and some of these differences are important in shedding light into how learnerhood works. In this chapter I will present two learners whose experiences with the GPA and with StepOut were instructively different from the norm and from each other.

9.1.1 Jacob in Slovakia

Of all the learners I followed, Jacob seemed to be having the most difficult time learning his host language. This fact was unexpected to some extent, because he had spent much more time in Slovakia than most of my participants had spent in their host countries. Jacob did a two-year Sprint in Slovakia, and then returned to Slovakia after a summer. Then as International Staff, he spent a year in Slovakia before attending StepOut, which was rare. By the time I visited him on the field, he had lived there an additional year and a half. Jacob’s struggles with Slovak proficiency are also surprising because he is in fact far more immersed in the host language than any of my other participants. Not
only is he the only American in his field site, serving on a team with ten other Slovaks (all of the team meetings and activities are held in Slovak), but he also has a Slovak wife, sees his in-laws frequently, and attends a Slovak church. This potential for immersion sets him apart from most of my participants, who serve on teams with many Americans, speak English in their marriages, and attend international, English-speaking churches. It is worth then looking more closely at Jacob’s model of learnerhood, to see why immersion, even when the immersion is actually linguistic and not merely geographic, has not been decisive in helping Jacob achieve his desired level of proficiency.

Like most of my participants Jacob said he “took Spanish in high school” but “did not learn anything”. He started learning Slovak in 2005 while he did a Sprint there for two years. Jacob had longer exposure to the Slovak language and culture before joining staff than any of my participants except Mark, who had also done a Sprint in Croatia long before moving there long term. Like most participants, Jacob said that “language was not a priority in Sprint” and even though he did some language activities throughout that time, he “didn’t have long term in mind. I don’t like languages, so I didn’t study hard or pay attention. It was a class, and the team was doing it, so I went. Five or six of us in the class… grammar, a lot of grammar, which doesn’t work for me”.

We see in Jacob’s Sprint learning many of the themes outlaid in the previous chapters. He said he “did language” for four hours a week for a month in the first semester, and then in the second year did two hours a week for one semester. The focus on finding things to “do language hours” is apparent; if his calculations are correct, he would have spent 50 “hours” on language during his Sprint internship. As I explained in Section 6.6.3, language learning is not merely a matter of hours; since those hours were
“grammar which doesn’t work” and he had no motivation as a Sprinter to “study hard or pay attention”, these hours may not have contained much noticed, comprehended, deeply-processed input.

Interestingly, I interviewed one of Jacob’s Sprint teammates, Anthony, who also spent two years in the city, and attend the same classes. According to the Slovak national staff who were around at that time, Anthony was interested in Slovak, and always sought to practice the little he knew, ask questions about the language, reading signs. Anthony judged that he had several relationships where he spoke primarily in Slovak after the first year of Sprint. Anthony progressed in the language, and did have “long term in mind”, considering returning as International Staff. Despite formal classes which Anthony also judged to be ineffective, his intentional Slovak acquisition impressed his Slovak teammates. So began a cycle of positive reinforcement, where using Slovak a little engendered further interactions in Slovak, which furthered proficiency. Anthony asked the national director if he could spend more of his free time on language learning via books and conversation partners, as it was something he enjoyed. This went against Sprint policy, which normally downplays language learning. Anthony still seeks out opportunities to use his Slovak in the United States, even though he never returned after Sprint. Anthony considers himself to be good at languages, although “not a language genius”. The contrast between Jacob’s and Anthony’s Sprint experiences highlights the fact that aptitude does play a significant role, despite the fact that aptitude is downplayed by Love the World and absent from the GPA and sociocultural methodologies. Aptitude can engender motivation, which most importantly, created opportunities for interaction. Although Anthony didn’t come back long term, he used metalinguistic knowledge and
cognitive skills to surmount the limitations in classroom instruction, and attain a relatively high degree of proficiency, in the face of the official Love the World Sprint policy.

Jacob’s classroom hours may have done him more harm than good - socializing him into ways of thinking about language learning that came back to haunt him later. Certainly “not having long term in mind” had consequences for him, as he met a Slovak woman in his second year and before the end of his stay they became engaged. Although unforeseen, Jacob was now married to Slovakia. He raised some support and returned to Slovakia in December 2008 and married in January 2009. At that time, the national director in Slovakia, an American who had learned sufficient Slovak to administer meetings in Slovak, gave him “two years in Slovakia to learn the language”, according to the two-year policy described in Sections 6.6.1 and 6.6.2. An atypical situation for Jacob was that he attended StepOut after already having spent a year and a half of time in Slovakia, pursuing language learning on his own, without any training, or direction from the national or regional leadership. He had tried to use the LAMP method, described in Section 4.4.1, a method taught at StepOut before 2005, and the “go-to” method for language acquisition that his leadership knew of from their own StepOut experiences.

Jacob describes the LAMP method thus:

I’d learn a phrase, have a Slovak translate it, go and say it to 25-30 people, to the same people every day. “Hello my name is Jacob I want to learn Slovak. This is all I can say, bye”. It was weird for them, but then I added phrase each time. Like “What is your name?” “How are you”, “Thank you for speaking to me”. (StepOut 2010)

On the fourth day he started to tell those people on his “language route” (mostly shopkeepers) what he was doing and asked if he could come to shop and speak a
bit. The whole LAMP book is composed of different dialogues, which a learner can have translated and learn by repetition as they speak with people in their community. Eventually a learner is supposed to reach a point where real interaction can occur. Jacob continues:

My language grew like a snowball, one phrase at a time (…) But it was just “ok” effective (…) I would freeze up and had to read the card (containing the scripted dialogue that was to have been memorized). I read too slowly, and people were behind me in line, so I was annoying people. It’s not a good culture for that- LAMP was not developed for that culture. (…) I did it about 50 or 60 times. (StepOut 2010)

One big impediment to the LAMP method was that as Jeremy and MTI director Dwight Gradin also noted, LAMP is designed for an imagined rural setting in the tropics, where people are in the streets and speak an unwritten language. Jacob also sustained a severe back injury, which impeded his ability to walk through most of 2009, a critical aspect of LAMP. While he was stuck at home, he tried “to just learn words at home, which was not effective. I tried to do different creative things because I was ‘full time language’ and I tried to fill up the time. I do not know how effective it was”.

This focus on acquiring vocabulary words in their dictionary form, to the detriment of acquiring morphological patterns, syntactic patterns, or idiomatic chunks was a common feature of my participants’ language learning whenever they were left to their own devices. A significant aspect of these American’s second language learnerhood appears to be that language learning MEANS learning new words. Jacob also feels that language is becoming an enemy, perhaps due to some sort of learning difficulty related to word memory, one of the components of language aptitude (Sparks et al. 2011).

I’m not very… I’m not blessed with language learning ability. Actually this is kind of a side note, actually in the last two days, I spoke with some people, because I should have a lot more of it, with as much time as I’ve
spent with the language” so I think I have some kind of a learning disability, some kind of a memory thing. So it’s goin’ slower than most people.

I haven’t turned language **totally into an enemy, but it’s getting that way.** I’m extroverted and I want to know people, so language is a big barrier, **kind of an enemy.** I don’t want it to be my enemy, I don’t know what I want it to be, I just want to learn it. (StepOut 2010)

Jacob relates that being immersed in the language, which is the promise of success for sociocultural methods, does not in fact help. His teammates speak mostly in English, and rarely continue to engage him in Slovak, something which I observed in my field visits as well. Jacob said that he never reads signs, ads or makes use of incidental language in his environment (Cenoz & Gorter 2008). He hypothesizes that since he can never remember characters’ names in movies either, probably the word or language part of his memory is not strong. Immersion is only useful if input is noticed, comprehended, processed and recalled, which rarely happens for the input Jacob is exposed to by being immersed. Even being married to a Slovak did not help much. He decided to use English at home as the language of their marriage, “Do I want to be married or do I want to speak the language? I chose to be married well. Doing LAMP method I’d go out and get tired from speaking, so my brain was done. I didn’t want to speak anymore when I came home”.

Jacob’s attempts to learn the language through LAMP in 2009 and into 2010 were abandoned due to his injury, and the perceived ineffectiveness of the method. By the time he arrived at StepOut in 2010 (they couldn’t attend in 2009 because of injury and visa reasons), Jacob had had five years’ experience living in Slovakia, and carving out a role for himself which did not require Slovak proficiency. Nevertheless, he had acquired some language and could:
…make sentences with bad grammar. The grammar (of Slovak)’s really really complicated, I can tell you what stuff is and tell you a story, hold a basic conversation, get to know students, where they’re from, what their name is, where they study. I can understand above 50%, maybe 60 or 70, but only for a certain amount of time, and then my brain overloads and I get angry because I’m not understanding every word. With language, I’m a perfectionist. (StepOut 2010)

After StepOut, in 2010, Jacob wanted to regroup and buckle down. His dedicated time for language learning had been extended beyond two years due to his circumstances. He hoped that he would spend ten hours a week working on language, with one or two language helpers, using the GPA, as far as he understood it.

I’m hoping to get one or two three language helpers. Where this method they’re trying to teach us now I’m going to try to do that I think. I do not know yet. I’m still trying to figure it out. But the method they’re trying to teach us now with books and him telling stories or listening to things I haven’t gotten a good grasp of a yet fully. Something along the lines of like a book. (StepOut 2010)

Clearly Jacob had difficulty visualizing exactly what the GPA entailed. Outside of those ten hours working ON language, he hoped he would spend thirty hours working IN language, in team meetings in Slovak, or working with Slovaks. Just as before, this immersion plan did not materialize, as he ended up speaking English far more often than Slovak in his duties. He also did not implement the GPA as he intended. By the time of a Skype follow-up interview with him in February 2012, he couldn’t remember the name of the GPA, calling it “the learner method”. He had only just begun spending five hours a week on language, and hadn’t really spent any time on “language learning” throughout much of 2011 because of furloughs in the United States, children being born, and other duties.
Jacob’s working model of the GPA was to have students tell him stories based on pictures, record them, write down the vocabulary he did not know, and then listen to those recordings. He had transformed the GPA into a homemade “McDonalds method” where he went with a Slovak grammar chart to the McDonalds, approached random customers to tell him a story which he recorded. Sitting in a McDonalds booth, he listened to these stories, wrote down words in a notebook and translated them into English. Even this practice, which was far afield of Thomson’s original design for the GPA, is revealing about the role of StepOut in socialization into learnerhood. On the one hand, because of the limitations of StepOut, and the perceived inaccessibility of the GPA materials, Jacob had a very distorted view of what Mary had been advocating. On the other hand, the fact that he THOUGHT he was doing what he had been taught at StepOut shows that Jacob powerfully oriented to the “official” recommendations for language learning of Love the World, and that he desired to apply what he believed he had been taught. Since there is little support or feedback from the organization, there is no way to gauge if the method is being effectively implemented.

By the time of my field visits to him in April 2012, language learning still hadn’t taken. I observed that neither his Slovak teammates nor wife spoke with him in Slovak, because in the short-term communicating with him was really frustrating to them. Ironically though, in the long run, Jacob’s lack of Slovak was even MORE frustrating; Slovak teammates intimated to me the difficulties both they and Jacob had in working around his lack of proficiency. In a Skype interview in February 2012, he even said that if he didn’t learn the language soon, he would have to leave the field, because it was a burden on everybody.
At a meeting with Slovaks which I observed in the field, he drew laughter almost every time he spoke in Slovak. His attempts also sparked metalinguistic commentary which drowned out the content of his conversational contributions. As a result, he switched to English, where he could make himself understood. Then at a party at his house, with all Slovaks in attendance, Jacob did use tokenistic phrases, discourse markers and names for objects from Slovak. English was the matrix language, but the peppering of Slovak forms indexed a national Slovak identity frame. In particular, Jacob’s Slovak was noticeably missing expressions. He always code-switched back into English when he would hit an expression like “how they really are”, which he couldn’t formulate in Slovak. The Slovak students in attendance wanted to practice English, so they did not mind these switches. One student’s English was more limited, but Slovak staff and students could give ongoing translation when needed. Finally, the fact that early on in Slovakia, the Sprinters who established Love the World there did entirely English-mediated ministry; this has led to a chain reaction wherein all national staff are highly proficient in English. This in turn shelters American long-term field workers like Jacob from being able to break out of an English-mediated ministry role.

Jacob felt in my 2012 visit that his biggest problem was having no accountability. What is more, he could not even visualize what kind of accountability would be most useful to him or how to implement it. Jacob was simply not equipped to provide the structure he needed, yet Love the World is reluctant to force an accountability structure on its workers, to preserve their flexibility. When I pressed him to describe accountability he struggled in his reply. As evidenced by his truncated utterances (such as line 4, 12), hedging (lines 20-21) and frequent reformulations, he groped for what to say.
I cannot it’s hard for me to grasp how to put how to hold me accountable it’s hard for me to say this is where I want to be other than just to say I want to be done (with language learning) but you’re never done but I want to understand. so I don’t know how to tell umm how to hold me accountable other than I would like to memorize this many words a week you can quiz me on them or I want to get four out of the five days I’m going to the gym. or what else? things like this I guess it’s hard for me to set goals I guess (Skype interview 2012)

This is the downside of devolving language policy to ever more local levels. The kinds of accountability structures which are strictly in place at the organizational level for matters relating to personal behavior, theological orthodoxy, financial health, are absent for language learning. Jacob describes the kind of accountability he would want thus:

I would love to have a measuring stick to show me if I am progressing or how I am progressing. Because if I had that, I know what I’m doing and not doing. Right now I do not have that. I do not have any tests or anything. So that would be like building a house you could see what you’re doing you might not even realize how I’m accomplishing things. If I do not know that I’m growing it’s not very encouraging. (Jacob, Slovakia, field interview, 2012).

His comment matches almost exactly similar comments made by Julie, Jack, Kristina, Mark, Sara, Kristin and Erica. Later in Section 9.3.4, I will propose an alternative model of assessment and accountability which would address all of their concerns.
Ironically, Jacob is the kind of learner who would most benefit from strict adherence to the GPA, an ideal GPA learner. He is extroverted, patient, loves to engage people in simple conversation. He is not good at visualizing words, but better at repeating them. He loves to be engaged in activities with objects, and hates the classroom setting. He acknowledges that many of the metalinguistic techniques which make academic models successful are difficult for him. Moved by his plight and frustration, I attempted at the end of my field visit to teach him again the principles contained within the GPA and PILAT models which would be most useful to him. He seemed hopeful, but the difficulty was again that he didn’t grasp the methods well enough to train a local informant how to use them. If there were a person in his city who was knowledgeable about the GPA or PILAT methods and committed to helping him use them, and to providing the programmatic structure and accountability, I feel that Jacob’s frustrations could be over. Perhaps if Jacob had attended Thomson’s official and in-depth two week GPA training at an earlier stage in his learnerhood, he might have better understood and implemented those methods and saved a great deal of frustration. Yet there is little institutional support for his language learning at this point, as he has long since exited the “two year window”. Because his knowledge of the GPA was so rudimentary and misunderstood, his attempts to “use that method” ended up working against him, and consigned him to over a year of ineffective learning.

A year after the field visit, Jacob reported that things were improved much. He seems to have finally gotten his teammates to overcome their desire or willingness to speak English with him and use Slovak. He sent this message in February 2013 to his supporters, full of frustration and hope.
The **biggest opportunity or challenge** in our life right now is my language study. I am able to understand good bit and hold a shallow conversation but I need to step it up. So my leaders have given me 6 hours a day to devote to language study for the next three months. I am **excited to have this time and also scared.** (...) The biggest thing I am doing for language is only speaking Slovak with everyone, including my wife until 8pm. After 8pm my brain is shot! **Yesterday was great!** I think it was the most Slovak I have spoken ever in one day. (Support letter February 2013)

This optimism, however, seems to have abated by March. As his report reveals, once more he is focused on vocabulary words, rather than learning structures or templates in interaction. He is engaged in individual passive activities, such as memorizing verses or listening to conversations he recorded. He is either not doing, or not counting, rich authentic interactive activities as part of language learning. He seems to feel guilty to report that he is still working on language so much after eight years in the country.

Honestly, I don’t have any exciting or encouraging things to write about. Spending long hours on language is needed but **doesn’t make for great newsletters.** Five days a week I walk to the library, rain or shine or snow, and study from 9am till 12:30 or 1pm. I leave when my brain decides not to absorb anymore new vocabulary words or grammar. While in the library, I am memorizing Bible verses in Slovak, reviewing words that I would like to know, and listening to Slovak conversations on my computer over and over. (Support letter March 2013)

Jacob also contacted me at this time for my thoughts on the Pimsleur approach, which also is an individualized, passive, repetition- and recording-based language learning program, although with a focus on meaningful chunks rather than decontextualized words. Regardless of the effectiveness from a pedagogical standpoint, he seems to be finally noticing a difference.

One encouraging thing is that people are starting to say they see a big difference in my Slovak. I just need to continue to put in quality time and I will get it. (Support letter March 2013)
Jacob admitted during a Skype interview in early 2012 that there are significant consequences to his failure to learn the language.

If I do not make progress, my wife can be really really angry... especially in my life because my daughter will be speaking Slovak... and if my wife is speaking Slovak to her ... so I will not know what they’re saying. My in-laws are Slovak, very extroverted so this is a huge stress in my life. So my most fear is what if I do not get it because I love people and I love Slovaks. The love to know them but when I can speak with them it’s rough. And I’m reminded of that every 2 seconds because I live in Slovakia ... **There’s no way I can live in Slovakia long-term if I do not get the language.** Mentally I do not think it would be healthy I think I would drive myself crazy. (Skype interview, February 2012)

This seems to echo Mary’s and Miriam Jerome’s feelings that language can be a significant factor in field workers abandoning their host sites, despite representing an enormous investment of time, resources, and training. Although the GPA had the most potential to help Jacob of any of my participants, a lack of training, a lack of personal understanding, and a lack of institutional will and accountability seemed to have conspired against him being able to use it effectively.

9.1.2 Lauren in Germany

Lauren is a very different case than Jacob. She attended StepOut in 2011, before being sent to Germany to work as a field worker after many years of working in the United States. She is older than the average new International Staff, and has considerable experience in the organization with her; her confidence was striking. What distinguishes Lauren most from the other participants I studied is that she was totally committed to use the GPA, and felt it was fairly straightforward to use and easy to understand. The obstacles which prevented other workers from using the GPA seemed not to apply to or to deter her.
As Lauren was in Western Europe, not Eastern, I did not conduct an interview with her at StepOut 2011. I visited Germany on my way to Sweden during my field visits in 2012 and was able to connect with her. Other learners had commented that they heard that Lauren was actually trying the GPA, something that seemed anomalous or noteworthy among her cohort. I was able to get a rough idea of her trajectory of learnerhood through an extended interview and observation then at the time of my field visit. The model of learnerhood she brought to StepOut was similar to the typical profile. Her high school experiences conditioned her to turn at first to academic settings, where language seemed to be focused on grammar, by which she means formal accuracy (lines 5, 6, 7, 9).

1 well you know
2 the only thing I’ve really tried
3 is taking German in high school
4 and I mean the thing that I’m worried about
5 is that my grammar is gonna turn out really bad
6 and also I’m at the mercy of [language helpers] teaching me correctly
7 like I’m totally dependent that they are teaching me the right words
8 and pronouncing and getting it correctly
9 and teaching me the right grammar
10 which both of them
11 I have confidence that they are fine
   (Lauren, field interview 2012)

Lauren feels at the mercy of her helpers (line 6), without a book to confirm that the grammar is indeed correct. Amber in Slovakia expressed the same sentiment.

I’d like some kind of balance between growth participator approach and going through a language book because I am a very visual learner so I like books and seeing things written
and I wanna know grammar well the grammar part I think is so important
   (Amber, Slovakia, StepOut 2010)
Unlike Amber, Lauren feels sure that since her helpers are native speakers, her concerns for grammatical accuracy are needless. When she first found out she was going to Germany, she turned to a beginner German class at a community college, which emphasized metalinguistic knowledge. She recognized though that the weakness of her high school classes, and the community college class, was speaking opportunities.

1 whereas with class
2 for most class you do not speak that much
3 I mean I did take a class when I was on staff
4 and attended a normal community German class for beginners
5 like most of the stuff I knew that
6 even that you just do not have a whole lot of time to speak
7 and that’s what I needed was more vocabulary
8 and more speaking time
9 so that’s another reason why I want to try [the GPA]
   (Lauren, field interview 2012)

The GPA was unknown to her before she attended StepOut, but the emphasis on speaking abilities in Mary’s presentation and in Thomson’s own explanations of the GPA persuaded her that the GPA would be the best model of learning.

10 I mean the good thing is that it’s getting me speaking
11 which I
12 that was
13 I haven’t been super confident to speak
14 I know that really holds me back from learning
15 so that’s been one of the benefits of
16 I feel really comfortable with both of them
17 about speaking and messing up
18 and so that’s been good
19 yeah so it’s nice
   (Lauren, field interview 2012)

She said she did not need German for academic purposes, or to write a paper, but to just have a conversation. In recognizing this she highlights the mismatch between the registers and modalities of the host language taught at most language schools (formal, standard, written varieties) and the register of the host language that these field workers
really need (informal, oral, youth varieties). By choosing young, educated speakers of her target dialect, Lauren does indeed seem to be learning the kind of German that she aims at, based on my observations of her as a highly proficient German speaker. While many participants felt they had only a vague idea of the GPA, Lauren felt that the presentation at StepOut was more than sufficient, if people took the time to do the readings.

1 L: yeah I knew that [finding a helper] was the first step
2 the program is **pretty self-explanatory**
3 I: so you DID find the program pretty self-explanatory?
4 L: oh yeah!
5 for sure!
6 I mean it’s **not rocket science**
7 and I mean the for the first phase
8 all of the lessons are **pretty laid out**
9 so yeah
(Field interview 2012)

She decided to start at the beginning despite some knowledge retained from her community college class, as there “were some things that I knew I needed review on- like some of the preposition stuff”. Although some of the language forms in the first phase were ones she had already acquired, she thought “it made it easier at the beginning because I did not know so many- I mean I wasn’t learning a bunch of new words every time...half I already knew and half were new words so it was nice”. She soon however “got into things that I did not know as well”.

Lauren’s experience seems to contradict the most frequently perceived weaknesses of the GPA. The first is that it was too hard to understand based on the StepOut training. When asked if StepOut was an adequate preparation, she said she got a good overview of it and that the day they got to practice it in the park was great. Her only critique was that the presentation was pretty dry; if she had known that she was actually going to use the method, she would’ve asked more questions about it. She has advocated
for one of the German national leaders to go through Greg Thomson’s official training so that the program can be more widely adopted. When I confronted Lauren with the fact that other field workers felt like they were unclear about the GPA after StepOut, she agreed that being handed the giant book of materials could be a little intimidating, “like what’s this all about? if you just sit down and read it then it’s pretty easy and makes a lot of sense”. There were a couple components she said she had to read a few times but for the most part she thought it was straightforward and actual lesson plans were easy to follow. The only aspect that she has not implemented is the “lexicarry” vocabulary logs that the GPA suggests. She did admit that StepOut presented learners with “a lot of information... with information overload and I was so moody because I was on staff for nine years and saying goodbye to friends and family so I wasn’t in a position to make a lot of good decisions about life or something”. Upon arrival to the field however she thought back to StepOut and decided “they said ‘hey use this!’ and I was like ‘okay why not?’ because I had so much going on and here is something being handed to me.’Why not use it?’”

Lauren’s experience explains more of why Mary had limited power to train people in the GPA. The language learning component of StepOut was embedded in a very intense five-week program that was already “information overload”. The emotional disruptions of impending moves also might lend participants to not being “in a position to make a lot of good decisions”. StepOut may not be the most effective point in a learner’s trajectory to receive training in the GPA, a point I return to and address in Section 9.3. Despite these obstacles Lauren found the StepOut training to be informative and sufficient, if a little dry. Other learners perhaps are quick to blame their lack of
understanding of the GPA on the organization, outsourcing their responsibility for training themselves to learn languages well.

Lauren’s experience contradicts a second perceived weakness of the GPA, that it was too hard to train a language helper. Lauren very quickly found a helper who had just finished her *Abitur* and was moving to India. She had no job, and therefore plenty of time and energy available to prepare for the language sessions. She was able to get all of the props required for Phase I from home, using childhood toys, saving Lauren much trouble as well as a significant expense. Lauren found it very easy to train this helper in the method.

10 I: did you find like
11 it took a lot of preparation
12 on your end
13 or more hers
14 and/or you both had to do a lot of the preparation for it?
15 L: it really *wasn’t much preparation at all*
16 and that was one of the things that wasn’t
17 I think if I
18 if I would’ve put more thought into it
19 it would have been better
(Field interview 2012)

Lauren was basically able to hand off the significant preparation required to make the GPA work to the language helper, an ideal scenario. Her language helper spoke fluent English (this is not recommended by the GPA), so there was also no need to translate the materials.

20 I: so you gave her all of the stuff to read
21 so she had already read it?
22 L: yeah I e-mailed it to her
23 the electronic copy online
24 so you
25 I: so she was able to figure that out by herself
26 in English instructions
27 L: oh yeah

403
all that was in English
but her English is great
I: so she had never seen it done?
L: no
and she was skeptical
same thing with [my second helper]
both of them were skeptical at first.
Like is this really going to work?
but then especially
especially because at first
it’s mainly like listening and responding
and not like talking
so she was like how is this going to work?
(Field interview 2012)

As described in Section 7.5.1, there are strong pre-existing ideologies of how language learning should proceed at each field site. The GPA challenged the beliefs and experiences of her two German language helpers. Perhaps precisely because they were not trained as language teachers (unlike many of the instructors my participants sought out), they put their skepticism aside, and were willing to learn a new system. Østby (2010) notes that this process does not always go as smoothly as it did for Lauren’s helpers, who were even convinced to use the GPA for their own language learning.

but then when she saw how much I was learning
and how I could respond more
umm she was like
“wow!
this really make sense
to do [language learning] this way!”
she was going to be going to India then
to do some traveling
and she said
I could totally use these principles
when I go to India
so um yeah
so it created a believer
(Field interview 2012)
Lauren says that the GPA is the main thing she has been using to learn the language, apart from attending a German language church service. She is in Phase II of the GPA, eliciting input from wordless picture books. She covers up the words in a story, then asks her language helper to elaborate as much as possible in German what is going on in the picture. These stories were recorded for later use. I asked her if she actually went back to listen to the large amounts of recordings she had amassed from her GPA lessons.

L: yes I have **hours and hours of German** on my computer
I: you would usually go back and listen to those?
L: yeah at night
I: how often a week have you been meeting with your language helper?
L: usually it’s Monday through Friday for an hour and a half every day because this is your language year
that’s your main focus
I: how much time do you spend on this outside of meeting with your helper?
L: probably another hour so
I: you go back and listen to recordings
L: yeah or looking back at my workbook
(Field interview 2012)

An immediately apparent weakness is that low frequency structures are made salient in the story books, a page of which is presented in Figure 9.1 below.
Lauren did show control over several surprisingly infrequent vocabulary items; in the case of the particular lesson I observed, the word “der Schornstein” (chimney), became the focus of an extended negotiation. Yet she struggled with far more common but less visualisable language features such as verbs which govern a dative pronoun in German that would govern a subject pronoun in English. “Das gefällt mir” (lit. that pleases to-me) is the German variant of the phrase “I like it”. Features such as the contrast between “nein” used to align with a negative, and “doch” used to disalign with a negative (English uses “no” in both cases), are also abstract yet frequent in authentic German conversational input.

Such learning again overemphasizes the acquisition of uninflected vocabulary items, rather than the acquisition of morphological or syntactic frames, which are more useful for conversation. Figure 8.2 shows vocabulary which Lauren acquired through a picture book lesson, and which she entered into her workbook, the workbooks she says she reviews an hour a night.
A vocabulary list like this, produced by the learner herself, and composed of salient forms elicited through meaningful host language interaction, certainly has advantages pedagogically over a pre-prepared vocabulary list presented at the end of a chapter in a typical academic German textbook. Several weaknesses are immediately apparent, however, not the least of which being that in opposition to the GPA, L2 forms are still being tied to L1 forms instead of to meanings or concepts. The first form, “Nachfloger” is spelled wrong, and presented without the gender information. “Witness” in the second form is ambiguous as to whether it is a verb or a noun. The German word “Zeuge” makes it apparent that the noun meaning of witness is being used, however “witness” is ambiguous as to animacy, while “Zeuge” is unambiguously animate.
“Zeugnis” can mean “witness” as used inanimately, not just “testimony” as glossed. Jehovah’s Witness could be either a person or a book in English, while German would make that distinction clear. “Prägenden” is glossed as if it were an infinitive, when actually it is an active plural participial adjective form of “to impress”. Conversationally, “prägen” is used more often than any English equivalent, and metaphorically means “to influence” more than “to make an impression” (which would be best rendered “beeindrucken”). It is almost always used in a participial construction with a “von” prepositional phrase: “jemand ist geprägt von etwas” (someone is influenced by something). “Entscheidungen”, the plural of “decision”, even though glossed in the singular, is tricky in that decisions are “met” and not “made” in German. Such information, which is key to apprenticeship into using these forms in an authentic way is noticeably missing from the workbook. Traditional grammatical instruction is more useful to the learner in these situations; if “Entscheidungen” were replaced in the notebook with “jemand trifft (eine) Entscheidung(pl. -en)”, the syntactic frame would be much more productive to the learner, and in the format it will almost always be encountered in actual speech. The metalinguistic knowledge needed to use these words accurately is notably missing from this GPA lesson.

The clearest case of an underspecified notation is that of “erinnern” (to remember), is a tricky verb to actually use in output. It requires a reflexive object, coreferent with the agentive subject, and the theme (what is remembered) must be expressed by a prepositional phase composed of the preposition “an” which governs accusative case. If no explicit theme is mentioned, the preposition “an” takes a prefix form for implied objects, “da-” plus an epenthetic consonant “-r-” to yield the form
“daran”. Assuming that Lauren knew German verb conjugation, either deductively from her previous academic learning, or inductively through the GPA, she would know that the 1st person singular form of “errinern” is “erinnere”. However “I remember” in English must be expressed as “ich erinnere mich daran” in German, not the literal gloss “ich erinnere”. Again, Lauren would be much better served if her workbook contained examples showing the entire argument structure, “jemand erinnert sich (dar)an (etwas)” instead of just the dictionary form “erinnern” which almost never appears in L2 input and is almost never required.

Still despite her nurturer’s skepticism, and an implementation that Thomson himself might take issue with, Lauren feels she is making progress using the GPA. She feels that if someone “is self-motivated and really wants to learn that this is a great method”. Because she had a base grammar understanding though, she feels like it works much better, and even though the GPA is designed for absolute beginners, she is skeptical that it would work for someone who had never had any metalinguistic instruction or explicit grammar teaching, that there would be too many holes in the knowledge. She is even unsure if she will acquire the language in a way that is grammatically accurate, as opposed to just being able to make herself understood. In fact she wishes that she had spent more time on academic learning earlier, “kicking herself for not taking more German in school”.

And yet, Lauren acknowledges that if she had taken German classes all the way through college, she would have never had a relationship with her language helper. In this point she neatly encapsulates the attractiveness of the GPA to missions and development organizations (see Section 5.2), invoking relationships (lines 2, 7) and heart depth (line 6).
and that’s one of the things Love the World really wants
is that this is a way to build a meaningful relationship
that you start to share stories about your life
start out more on a surface level
that starts with what happened
then as you go deeper
you go to more abstract language
it’s kind of designed to be relationship
the way
which is naturally sharing
sharing life experiences
(Field interview 2012)

Lauren demonstrates that her concept of learnerhood was significantly shaped by StepOut
and by reading Greg Thomson’s own writings. She correctly identifies the heart of why
Mary advocates for the GPA in the organization, and seems to be living out its promise,
both in terms of her friendship with her language helpers, and in terms of her increased
competence and confidence in German interaction. She says that before, in college
classes, her passive knowledge far outstripped her active knowledge, but now, using the
GPA, everything she knows she also feels comfortable using in conversation with real
Germans. This is precisely what Love the World is after, and so the experience of Lauren
throws into sharp relief the many other workers who are dissuaded from using the GPA
by their own perceptions and the institutional inertia against it at lower scales.

9.2 CONSEQUENCES OF LEARNERHOOD TRAJECTORIES

In Chapter 8 and in the first part of 9, I have sought to analyze the themes
presented in Chapter 6 in a chronological way, situating them within the trajectories of
both typical and atypical learners. These trajectories have consequences beyond just the
language acquisition and language use behaviors. In this section, I will present some of
the different consequences that the evolution of learnerhood has for these field workers
and their organization.
9.2.1 Consequences: Lack of attainment

One of the most important consequences of the learnerhood that these workers bring to the field, and which the organization’s priorities seems to foster, is a lack of exposure to the kind of input that is most helpful in fostering attainment of proficiency. Functional, sociocultural, connectionist and cognitive SLA frameworks all hold that input which is most likely to become intake, and most usable in building a second language grammar, is input which is noticed and comprehensible (available form-meaning correspondence). As Susan Gass’ many publications have shown, input received via interaction is more likely to be noticed and comprehensible. Input-in-interaction is supported by rich discourse and situational context, and is more likely to trigger breakdowns in comprehension. Such breakdowns signal to a learner the insufficiency of their working model of the target language grammar and also lead to negotiation of meaning. Negotiation in turn provides repetition, elaboration, and deeper processing of target language forms.

If Gass’ hypotheses are true, then ultimate attainment will be a function of the amount of authentic interaction mediated by the target language. If, in contrast to sociocultural theories’ claims, explicit instruction and metalinguistic knowledge plays a function in increasing ultimate attainment, it is because learners can use that knowledge to generate more complex utterances, and to interpret more effectively the utterances of host language interlocutors, increasing the percentage of input which is comprehensible and noticed. Several factors seem to limit field workers’ access to this kind of input-in-interaction with host nationals in the host language, which are presented in alphabetical order in Table 9.1.
Table 9.1: Barriers to negotiated input in the host language

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barrier</th>
<th>How that barrier distracts from negotiated input</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Church life</td>
<td>Even host language churches often make significant accommodations to English-speakers. Host language input in the form of sermons is not interactive and largely un-comprehended.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Five-year mentality</td>
<td>New “long term” field workers think of their commitments as lasting roughly five years. This is long enough that host language proficiency would be beneficial. However if desired attainment is seen as being a three-year project, for only two years of fluent service, the work needed to achieve such proficiency feels less “worth it”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Heavy reliance on explicit instruction</td>
<td>Skepticism about and limited exposure to the GPA lead workers to rely on academic methods. Learners’ preference for classrooms and explicit instruction may be helpful if such knowledge is used to generate utterances which trigger interactions, and which make others’ utterances more comprehensible. Learners check off “doing language hours” with academic activities, and do not seek out interactive opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Host nationals’ preference for English</td>
<td>In both workers’ reports and my own observations, it can be difficult to find host nationals patient enough to follow through with an interaction in the host language. Host nationals’ own desire to access negotiated input in English seems stronger than field workers’ desire to access negotiated input in the target language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Language learning together with other workers</td>
<td>Instructional settings are often done with other team members, or English speakers, for reasons of economy or solidarity. English-mediated meta-instructional talk can overpower host-language mediated input. Teaching a wide range of proficiencies in a single class bores some learners, and overwhelms others.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Serving on teams of Americans</td>
<td>As field workers serve on teams, both formal team responsibilities and informal activities take up a significant amount of time, even in the “language priority” years. Meetings for leadership training, planning and organization, and most informal social activities are all mediated in English. The larger the team of Americans, the rarer host language interaction is.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Unspoken pressure to produce results</td>
<td>Internal pressure and the momentum of organizational culture as instantiated at host sites can lead workers to be discontent with pursuing conversations in the host language. Conversations mediated in English can more readily produce “ministry results” which seem to be defined as philosophical or spiritual conversations. Host language conversations are less “deep” and seen as less valuable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Family dynamics</td>
<td>Although married couples raise support together, the expectation in their evangelical subculture is that wives stay at home and care for the children. This division of labor cuts wives off from the input and interaction needed to acquire fluency, relative to their husbands, unless the wives have strong language aptitude or motivation. Wives may initiate a return to the United States, “wasting” the investment of resources to prepare the couple for service</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Workers who have attained a desired level of proficiency in the host language seem to have mitigated at least some of these variables. Such attainment is most often seen as a combination of three barriers. The first is finding host nationals who do not or will not speak in English, which mitigates barrier 4. This was seen as being more possible for those workers who arrived in the early 1990’s than for those arriving today. The second is field workers’ ability to free themselves from team or family responsibilities, something which is easier for pioneering single workers. This ability mitigates barriers 5, 6 and 8. A high aptitude allows learners to mitigate any detrimental effects which may arise due to barrier 3. All three of these mitigating attributes are mentioned in the following description of Brad, a pioneering and highly proficient learner of Italian.

1 S: he’s completely fluent
2 M: it’s… it’s actually perfect
3 so perfect that Italians are surprised to hear him speak English
4 they thought that he was Italian
5 I would love to find out what he did
6 he told me he did meet with the tutor
7 but he told me that most of his learning was him and another woman
8 when he was there at first
9 it was just the two of them
10 over for two months
11 two solid months
12 the two of them
13 and there was another couple moved in
14 and Brad was on his own doing things a lot
15 the interaction
16 he told me he was accomplishing these interactions
17 is being FORCED
18 to talk in their language
19 to buy things
20 to live and to
21 he has that
22 he’s got the kind of mind
23 where he retains things too
24 S: yeah he has the type of mind where he hears the word and
25 he remembers it
26 that he does not need to practice it
so I would say language came a lot quicker for him because of that and **he lives on his own** so he had to figure how to navigate the city for the staff coming in (Sara and Michael, Italy, StepOut 2011)

While Brad himself rejects the label “completely fluent” (line 1) or “perfect” (line 2) he acknowledged in an interview that his pioneering role gave him much more opportunity for interaction with Italians in Italian than his more recently arrived teammates, who serve on the largest team of Americans in any European field site. Because he had mitigated barriers 4, 5, 6 and 8, and because he is a self-described high-aptitude learner (lines 22-27), he was able to “get a lot from [his] tutor”, and mitigate barrier 3. Because of his quickly developing proficiency, he was able to engage more in Italian at an Italian-language church, mitigating barrier 1, and he was in fact able to produce the kind of results which he expected of himself, and which he felt happy to share with his supporters, mitigating barrier 7. Brad has also already been at his field site for seven years, and felt from the beginning that he might want to stay longer than the frequently mentioned five-year window. Thus barrier 2 was also not an obstacle to Brad, as he was motivated to succeed from the beginning. In summary, “success” in language learning is seen by these field workers as a combination of aptitude, team situation and personality, which allows a learner to mitigate these eight barriers to ultimate attainment.

9.2.2 Consequences: Indigenization and Anglicization of Ministry

Lauren in Germany, despite making significant progress, names barrier 6 as the most hindering one. The staff in Germany, which is largely German, outside of that one city where they are serving, is worried about the “Englishness” of Love the World, which I discussed in the previous section. The director planned to both eliminate Barrier 6 and
make “the ministry feel more German” by switching all team meetings into German, even though two of the Americans may not be ready. They are willing to sacrifice efficiency of communication, making the Americans work harder, for the symbolic value of having meetings in the national language.

Our (German) director would like us to do sometime next year is to switch our leadership meetings, which would be me and Matt and Beite, into German which, Matt and Beite could do it but I couldn’t. Well even Matt is pretty limited in some respects still but (the Germans) wanted, you know they want us to feel more German, the ministry to feel more German. (Lauren, Germany, field interview)

I saw this decision play out in two other cities. Team meetings were much longer, and there was often surreptitious translation, question-asking, and misunderstandings, but the input was negotiated to the point that it became comprehensible; it was reported as being “stretching” but good in the long run. This goal, for Love the World to feel “indigenous” and not Anglicized, is commonly alluded to by field workers, but threatened by the consequences of learnerhood at the different scales of the organization.

While Love the World leadership might place a value in resisting “Anglicization” there is an opposite pressure for field workers to use English which comes from the host nationals themselves. Wherever I met the host nationals with who Love the World field workers have connected, they mentioned curiosity about making foreign friends and the desire to improve English by interacting with native English speakers as their primary draws. Rahman, in describing why students in his country first seek out contact with Love the World field workers says that Bosnians are interested in Love the World for:

Different reasons, some talk to meet with American guys. Some thought that maybe connected with scholarship trips, but it’s not hard to find out that they are actually on a mission. A lot of students know English but do not have an opportunity to use it. (Rahman, Bosnia, field interview 2012)
He admits that improving English was his own reason for coming at first, and his girlfriend who wants to improve her weak English, a view also shared by Raisa.

[Bosnians] love English, English is the most popular language, its good to know it, its good for a job, everybody wants to know English, everybody’s trying to find where they can have schools to learn language to learn English especially. I know some organizations from America who are teaching English for free and that a lot of people go to that. Of course they wanna hang out and everything, but I think the primary reason they are wanna hang out with them is to be better at language. (Raisa, Bosnia, field interview 2012)

The reasons for staying around may evolve later, but Love the World tends to attract those host nationals who are extroverted, willing to try new things, interested in practicing their English, or patient enough to put up with speaking about very difficult topics in a truncated repertoire. Love the World tends to focus on university students, and although they also work with refugees, local Christian congregations, and children, the goal is often to mentor university students to engage in these activities. These university students are often seen as future national staff, and the hope of the “indigenization” of the ministry. Love the World can point to countries such as Macedonia or Romania as places where Americans are no longer involved, and operations are run entirely by host nationals, a situation which workers in my field sites are hoping to replicate. Yet because English forms such an integral part of attracting and developing host nationals, those individuals who choose to become national staff may ascribe to a different set of goals than those which Love the World has for them.

In Slovakia, Croatia and Hungary for example, the host national staff were all attracted to participate with Love the World by English language camps and visits to English classes in schools, activities which are still a staple of Love the World operations there. Since these activities were a kind of “doing ministry” that barely proficient
American staff could effectively participate in, a strong link between Love the World and English-mediated activity was forged. Those host nationals who were best positioned to build trust and solidarity with the American field workers who were in charge of their development and promotion were those whose interest in English led them to be more active and whose English proficiency was the greatest. When these host nationals took over operations, they were used to communicating with Americans in English. Host national staff in these locales prefer to use English when communicating, even with field workers fairly proficient in the host language.

This dynamic is part of what has made it hard for Jacob to attain proficiency, and de-incentivizes Hungarian for Tara, Jim, Eric and Amelia. In Slovenia, Erica and Kristin seemed aware that the nascent ministry there is on a similar footing. As the work was pioneered by American Sprinters, who admittedly saw little value of purpose in learning Slovene, almost all their Slovenian contacts are those whose interest and proficiency in English was enough to be willing to integrate into a group of eight Americans joking informally in idiomatic English. These Slovene students, who already have a foot firmly planted in the “American English” world of the Sprint team, are those most likely to develop into future leaders. As new International Staff, Erica and Kristin feel the pressure to change the “linguistic direction” of the ministry by modeling seriousness about Slovene language, to create the conditions for “indigenization” and to resist the Anglicization which has happened in other field sites.

As Blommaert (2010) describes, linguistic forms have different scales of circulation, and can trigger multiple indexical values depending on which scales are seen as framing the interaction. The increasing fluency and frequency of English use for these
future national staff occurred concurrently with their increasing investment in Love the World as an organization. Certainly, not every fluent 30-something English speaker in Zagreb for example was involved with Love the World. There are many paths to English proficiency in cities like Zagreb, Budapest and T’bilisi. But those students who were involved in Love the World found themselves proficient to become English speakers, frequently working alongside long term American field workers, and frequently guiding, translating for, and acting as cultural interpreters for the shorter term spring and summer projects. These “national” staff live clearly “transnational” lives, travelling to the United States, to Potsdam, Andalucía or Tallinn for pan-European conferences, to Budapest to conduct business with other staff at the Anglophone regional office. To the “typical” Croatian, Georgian, or Hungarian then, these leaders do not seem like “indigenous local leaders” but as embodying an Anglophone class of global agents, with access to a wide range of human and semiotic capital.

The lack of language proficiency, the “everyone speaks English” mentality, the mixed messages regarding the importance of language acquisition versus ministry- all of these factors have contributed to the development of a distinctly English-sounding, and American-feeling ministry. The evangelical churches scattered throughout these Eastern European cities often had Anglophone pastors, worship songs written in America and Australia, a predominance of evangelical Anglophone authors in their church libraries, and a range of English-proficient evangelicals in the congregation, whether from the developing world, or expatriate workers from North America. The organization’s ambivalence towards language learning at its various scales, and among its various policy makers, contributes to this Anglicization of European Evangelicalism. Love the World is
therefore seen by field workers in other organizations, one with “harder core” or “strict” language policies, as only reaching the English-speaking, transnational “fringe.”

Love the World has a reputation of being very strong, having a lot of people but being disconnected from local churches. If they’re disconnected, I do not imagine they’re doing ministry in Hungarian, probably a lot of English (Terry, field worker in Hungary, interview 2012)

Love the World reaches the fringe of society. Someone has to and there is room to reach the fringe, but someone has to reach the core (Dwight Gradin, MTI director, interview 2011)

Such assessments counter the organizational value on indigeneity, and highlight the need for a more carefully developed policy towards English-mediated ministry and the roles activities focused on the English language (such as camps, tutoring, conversation practice) should play in the greater scheme of Love the World operations at each field site.

9.2.3 Consequences: Finding a host culture role when the “gift” becomes a “barrier”

In Section 8.4.1 I presented field workers use of both positive “gift” and negative “barrier/enemy” metaphors for their host language proficiency. Language goes from being a “gift” to being an “enemy” when their lack of proficiency prevents a field worker from being able to lay claim to an “indigenous” identity, re-scaling themselves as a “national”. Since indigeneity is seen as being crucial to performing success as a field worker, both to their own self as well as to their supporter, low proficiency is experienced as a failure, and a fear of rejection. In the following narrative, in which Jacob presents his Slovak learning as a gift, he alludes to the inquisitive gaze of the girl who “stands in for” the entire society of Slovaks scrutinizing his motives.

1 I was sitting in
2 um
the library studying language, and there was a girl beside me, and
I asked her how to
could she help me with this little bit
she helped me
no, no, she looked at me really confused,
and she was just like “Why are you learning Slovak?”
because there’s only 5 million Slovak speakers in the world
and
in the business world
it’s a pointless language to learn
um,
because
at least in the Slovak eyes because
money is English
English is money
and so they have no idea, there’s
there’s not very much business to be had in Slovakia,
so they have no idea why
(Jacob, Slovakia, StepOut 2010)

Recall from Section 9.1.1 that Jacob eventually experienced Slovak not as a gift, but as a barrier or enemy. The fact that learners’ positive metaphors for language, turn to the more neutral image of the “barrier” or the negative image of the “enemy” over time, is a result of their being ill-prepared to face the challenges of acquiring the host language. The powerful psychological and emotional stances which get taken when describing their present and future failure have important consequences.

Since his teammates were quite patient with him, and since his wife and teammates were proficient and willing English speakers, he need not have been so frustrated with his lack of Slovak acquisition. Especially, since as he noted, many other longer-term American expatriates in his city do not speak Slovak at all. I argue that Jacob’s mounting frustration and failure is due to Love the World’s “heart language” ideology. Although Jacob had acquired certain repertoires of Slovak which facilitated daily life after six years in Slovakia, he could not be satisfied with this, as the “heart
language” of Slovaks still eluded him, and thus the Slovak language became his enemy and greatest source of frustration. Ironically, Love the World’s concern for emotional health, manifested in its desire to avoid firm language policies, its downplaying language acquisition in the pre-field training in favor of emotional and personality awareness activities, and its lack of assessment and accountability put Jacob in the position where his emotional health was comprised precisely because of his lack of language progress.

Achieving indigeneity requires finding an acceptable role in the host society; this poses a dilemma to Love the World field workers, who do not fit into the ready-made categories that are often assigned as foreigners. The forms of identification which field workers can lay claim to are limited without host proficiency, and are set against other iconic figures, that of “missionary”, “tourist”, “businessman”, and “language student”. They eschew the term missionary and its negative connotations. They are not businessmen, and share with tourists the reality that they are there to spend money rather than make money in the host county. However, they are certainly not tourists, committing for a much longer stay and desiring much more host culture integrations than tourists typically do (Smith 2003), a contrast in which Erica roots her Slovene learning.

1 Slovenes in particular
2 I think it takes a lot to build trust with them
3 but once you have their trust
4 they’re loyal to you for life
5 I think that language is just a really obvious part of that
6 they know that you’re there to make an investment
7 you’re not just like one of the other Americans
8 who comes for vacation and forgets about them
(Erica, Slovenia, field interview, 2012)

“Language learner” is a role common in Europe (Rinsche & Portera-Zanotti 2009, Rehm & Uszkoreit 2013), and one which communicates an interest in the culture and a
desire to know people more deeply than a tourist or a businessman. This could be perceived as flattering to the host national, but would also position the field worker as potentially rich or spoiled, able to be free from the requirement to “get a real job” and devote themselves to pursuing an interest in or curiosity about a foreign culture. For an Italian, a language with high cultural capital, an American’s motives for learning Italian may not even be questioned, as Italian has long been learned by a transnational elite interested in a language associated with high-value cultural artifacts (art, opera, classical music, cuisine). Slovene or Hungarian have less linguistic capital—mastery of the language confers fluent non-native speaker with less additional status or benefit on “the world stage”, and an American living in their country for a long time just to learn a language which confers little economic benefit over English may seem strange. As Simon put it, “I say ‘I am in [Country Z] to learn [language Z].’ When they ask why I want to learn [language Z], I say ‘because I live in [Country Z].’ So it does not really make sense”. Single field workers report that host nationals suspect their intention may be to find a suitable spouse in the host country, and that is why they are learning the language. This assumption potentially changes the field workers’ positioning as “altruistic” in interactions with the opposite gender.

In the initial stages, host nationals are often delighted to learn that a foreigner is learning their tongue, particularly if it is seen as one which bestows relatively little linguistic capital on learners, and if there are few models of foreigners passionate about learning it. Mark however reported “I am just waiting for the day when people stop being impressed by the amount of Bosnian I speak, and start to wonder why I do not know more if I have been here for so long”. If Mark were to plateau in his language, host
nationals might simply assume he is not a good language learner. Mark is afraid of plateauing not so much because he wants to be seen as a good language learner, but because progress in the heart language is key to his “indigeneity”, his attempt to re-scale himself as a “national”. If people “stop being impressed”, he loses the advantage of having a “gift” to give the Bosnian people, and the linguistic embodiment of his ideal identity- the indigenized charitable servant.

Field workers’ answer to the question “why are you here?” is thus a fraught with competing demands for being “successful” as a field worker, and for being “categorizable” for host nationals. Field workers report that their most successful identity claim is that they work for a student organization which seeks to serve students and help them connect to questions of faith and spirituality. This description is vague, and requires some elaboration, as there is no such ready-made category in host nationals’ classification systems for foreigners who live in their countries. The identity of field workers is set against other forms of transnational migrants- businessmen, language learners, tourists, and economic migrants- precisely in that the field workers are supposed to indigenize, and give the “gift” of language proficiency. A lack of proficiency not only leads “not making sense” to host nationals, but also to failing to somehow become indigenous in the eyes of the host nationals. These fears of failing as a field worker, and their sense of failure can lead ultimately to low morale, burnout, and attrition.

9.2.4 Consequences: Field workers’ short-term morale and long-term longevity

Www.missionarycare.com is a website frequently consulted by missions and development workers as a resource for problem solving many issues which affect morale and longevity of field workers. The site has resource banks for dealing with a wide
variety of issues, including eating disorders, encounters with the occult, pornography addictions, schooling for children, and around forty other topics judged to potentially affect the effectiveness of field workers. Yet language acquisition is not mentioned on the site at all. As I have noted before, Miriam Jerome, a professional counselor to field workers feels that “language is huge in the attrition rate- more than statistics attest”. Jerome notes that the overall attrition rate of field workers is very high. Many of the agencies she works with report to her that 50% do not return after the first four year term, and another study surveying many organizations found a 44% attrition rate over the same period.

Because of the taboo of speaking about a lack of language acquisition, there is very little information on what role language plays in attrition. Almost all studies of attrition and longevity rely on self-report and survey data, where participants might downplay language difficulty as a factor, or not realize the extent to which language barriers can lead to feelings of isolation. Mary alluded to this phenomenon in a comment to me at StepOut saying that people put of language learning, and avoided language coaches and “then eventually ‘We’ve decided to go home because our daughter is not adjusting well’ or something like that. I’m thinking that might be part of it, but it might be that you haven’t learned the language well. It’s underreported because it’s not an acceptable thing to say, that you did not learn the language”.

Worth Keeping (Hay et al. 2007) is the definitive resource that faith based NGOs use to guide their HR policies, administer counsel, and improve member care. The data in this volume seems to lend support that language acquisition is not seen on the surface as a major concern to field workers, but plays a significant role in the main reasons for
attrition. In a large research study of agencies with more than 25 staff, field workers were asked to identify the primary reason they left the field (Hay et al. 2007:12). “Cultural adaptation” and “language learning” were combined into the category “cultural” reasons. Almost none of the leaving field workers marked this category as the primary reason; the most frequently cited reasons being 1) unavoidable reasons (retirement, political crisis, marriage, end of project, death), 2) personal reasons (spiritual immaturity, health, lack of commitment, low self-esteem, doubt about call, moral failure), 3) family reasons (children, elderly parents, marital conflict), 4) agency related (support, policy disagreements, theological conflicts), 5) work related reasons (dismissal, lack of job satisfaction, inadequate supervision), 6) team reasons (conflicts with team mates and local leaders). Workers are reluctant to pin their attrition on cultural reasons, which included language learning, and which placed a distant seventh. Yet it can be assumed that some of the personal, family, and team stresses are at least partly rooted in isolation from the host community and the demands of functioning in a language which workers are not proficient in.

In Chapter 9 of Hay et al (2007), on pre-field preparation, language learning training is only referenced twice, completely subsumed as part of cross-cultural preparation, whereas spiritual, emotional and financial preparation are each given large treatments in the text. For example, in a study of best practices it is references that “language, culture and cross-cultural communication skills were taught and expected” (Hay et al. 2007:111). These “language skills” remain undefined. Pre-field training in language or language acquisition seems to be downplayed in this chapter.
Chapter 10 of Hay et al (2007) covers on-field arrival and training, and paints a different picture. The results of another survey are presented, which correlate retention and a wide array of personal variables. The term “training” implies that language learning is like other kinds of “training” which deliver content knowledge, rather than the organic growth of a cognitive grammar or socialized behavior. Initial language training is found to significantly correlate with long-term retention in the field. Initial language training was even found to more significantly correlate with retention than having a well-designed orientation program (120), and ongoing language and cultural studies had the highest correlation with retention for preventable attrition of any of the dozens of variables analyzed. The authors recommend as a result that language acquisition skills should be the first priority in pre-field training, followed by cultural issues, introduction to the agency, medical and health issues, the visa application process, moving preparations and support raising (122).

This advice is not implemented by Love the World, as language acquisition training gets far less play in the StepOut pre-field orientation program than the other issues mentioned. As far as on-field training, language training is again given priority, followed by training on cultural practices and norms, local religious beliefs and practices, agency or national church matters, contextualization, and developing personal faith (Hay et al 2007:123). Again, this recommendation does not match the practices of Love the World, as field workers, even in the “language priority” window of the first two years, receive more on-going training relating to contextualization, and developing personal faith than in language learning. Overall the picture from Worth Keeping is that field workers themselves tend to undervalue or are reluctant to relate their attrition to language
acquisition, yet pre-field language acquisition training and on-going language training were found to highly significantly correlate with attrition for preventable reasons.

Data from Love the World field workers seem to corroborate these findings, pointing out the affect language attainment can have on morale and longevity. Nick, in Country Y, noted that when field workers claim burnout, this often indirectly means language difficulties, saying that “the number one reason for ineffectiveness on our team is language learning”. Mark also notes that language difficulties lead to isolation and discouragement, affecting morale.

1 well a danger is a **loss of vision**  
2 in the mire of a **sense of isolation**  
3 and some might say well that’s weeding people out  
4 that do not need to be there  
5 but umm when you’re in a place like Bosnia  
6 in a place where it’s **not naturally encouraging or supporting**  
7 people have to have their vision renewed  
8 by coming on a Wednesday night  
   [to ministry events, thus justifying involvement in ministry over language learning]  
   (Mark, Bosnia, Skype interview 2012)

Roger, a long-term field worker in Hungary, was actively discouraged by Love the World from learning Hungarian when he first arrived to work with Hungarian students, because they thought it would delay his being able to fully participate in ministry. Not knowing Hungarian, he was eventually given a role in the theological development for workers in the Eastern Europe regional office. He was again discouraged from learning the language because he was assured his entire role would be in English. Roger reported being very disappointed, as the short-term time gains from not studying Hungarian, led to significant long-term issues.
He wanted to send kids to Hungarian schools, to save money and immerse his family in the local culture, but had to pull them out after two years because he and especially his wife couldn’t speak Hungarian well enough to communicate with teachers. When his daughter was bullied, they couldn’t speak Hungarian well enough to intervene.

Even though Roger has tried to find time in his free time to learn the language and has higher than average proficiency, he feels isolation from the community which affects his family’s willingness to remain in the field. This relates directly to Mary’s comment that people blame attrition on “my daughter’s not doing well” but that such issues often have language attainment at their root. Other field workers in Hungary note that many field workers give up on working with local Hungarians because the language is too difficult, and end up doing parachurch or administrative work, which is different than their original sense of calling, or what they were trained to do.

Michael, reported that the reason his family considers leaving the field is the isolation from a lack of language attainment, especially with his wife. “I think if we- if Sara had learned more, she wouldn’t have had as hard of an emotional time with language. I do not see how she could have” given the fact that they had to spend so much of their pre-field and early-field time and energy on other considerations and weren’t well supported for language acquisition. Jacob, in Slovakia, is much blunter. His host national teammates all expressed their deep concern for him to me, adjuring me to help him in some way. Jacob bluntly said “I have to learn this language soon, or else we are going to go home”, meaning that he would move his family to the United States, and pull the significant local know-how possessed by him and his wife off the field.

The frustrations experienced by Roger and Michael, where a lack of language
proficiency resulted in isolation, low morale, and the desire to go home, is a consequence of the gendered division of labor within Love the World. In couples where the wife had significantly higher language aptitude than the husband, the wives, although frustrated by the pace of their acquisition, seemed content that they were roughly “keeping up” with their husbands in terms of language proficiency, and felt equal ownership in the project of being field workers. Before a female field worker has children she has full participation in ministry projects, and a full schedule of meetings, where her input is valued and sought after. Before having children, men and women enjoy roughly equal opportunities for interaction and exposure to the host language. Simon met his wife Rachel on Stint in Country Y, and for their first years of service as IS, Rachel enjoyed relationships with host nationals. The prevailing ideology of motherhood within Love the World, probably rooted in more widely-circulating evangelical ideologies, is that the mother’s job is to stay home and care for the child. A lack of experience with child care options in the host culture and language barriers in communicating with alternative care providers may reinforce the couple’s decision for the new mother to remain at home.

This invariable leads to mothers leading highly circumscribed lives, and a drastic reduction in the quantity and depth of host language interaction. These women’s self-worth is affected because they contribute less to the “ministry” projects of Love the World. As Rachel wondered, “If I go home”, requiring her to justify her life in Country Y to supporters, “what am I going to have to talk about? I do nothing! Umm I just learn the language all the time, and I cannot even really speak it”. Self-worth is further affected by being unable to discharge domestic duties such as dealing with errands or helping in school because of the language barrier, with Sara feeling unable to communicate with
servicemen and Roger’s wife pulling their children from Hungarian schools. Urban, apartment living, which is very different from the suburban upbringing most of these women have had, makes child-rearing in the host culture seem even more foreign from the models they are familiar with in their own childhoods and peers raising children in America.

The language barrier is only exacerbated as they are cut off from host language input and interaction, and their skills suffer attrition. They are further reduced to an English-mediated world of interaction within the family, or English-mediated conversations with other expatriate mothers to negotiate child-rearing in the new environment. Simon and Rachel have struggled with whether they can responsibly remain on the field because of Rachel’s depression and frustration about their lack of host language proficiency and the isolation it causes. For Nick and Laverne and Michael and Sara that isolation is greater, since unlike Rachel, they were already mothers on arrival, and had no prior exposure to their host languages. The fact that Theresa and Amelia had a solid base in the host language before arriving on the field as International Staff, and their husbands’ creativity in finding ways for them to be involved in host language interaction have perhaps contributed to their avoiding the drop in morale which attends the expectations of motherhood.

An article called “Dropouts, Burnouts, Forceouts, Never-Should-Have-Gone-Outs”, written by field worker David Cox (2011) for a widely-read blog, reflects on the attrition issue and attempts to explain to supporting churches what is at stake in lowering the attrition rate of field workers.

Let me begin by saying that it is extremely expensive to get a missionary on the foreign mission field working. Besides the years of personal and
educational preparation that the missionary himself has to shoulder, once he “officially begins deputation” the costs are shared or shouldered mainly by local churches and the people of God.... Because of the high cost of getting Americans to other countries, fluent in the language of that country, acclimated to the culture of that country, and working the work of God there, we need to be very concerned about missionary drop out. (www.davidcoxmex.com)

The models of learnerhood which field workers bring to the field, and which Love the World shapes at its various scales sow the seeds of low morale and early attrition insofar as they remove workers from negotiated, comprehensible input,. A significant investment of skills and training, as well as a large financial investment (many of my participants raise over 40,000$ a year for a family), is lost if the workers leave the field early, for preventable reasons. Improving support for language acquisition could affect team relations, relations with the host community, and minimize isolation and discouragement; these are all factors which field workers say directly lead to their burnout and ultimate attrition.

9.3. APPLICATIONS FOR LOVE THE WORLD

As a condition of having access to its workers, Love the World asked that I would try to present some practical solutions or applications of this research project. In this final section, I present practical applications to my findings, which may be useful for Love the World or similar organizations who must train field workers to work in a variety of international settings. I attempt to relate these practical suggestions to larger theoretical discussions in the field of Applied Linguistics. I also present promising lines of study for future research which were raised during my work on this project.
9.3.1 What limits the organization’s agency in socialization?

As I discussed in Section 7.1, Love the World at the global level is marked by contradictions between ideologies of personhood, and thus second language learnerhood, which stem from educational and evangelical experiences. The contradictions between these ideologies constrain Love the World’s ability to act in a streamlined and unitary manner when it comes to implementing and troubleshooting the GPA. Skepticism toward implementing the GPA among leaders at the regional and national levels, combined with a lack of personal experience with language acquisition at the global and regional levels of decision making, foster the emergence of folk beliefs, pre-existing models of learnerhood which rely heavily on academic methods. These methods are what new field workers know most robustly, and what many older American field workers used when coming to the field in the early or mid 1990’s, when pre-Krashen grammar-translation approaches were the norm in Eastern Europe.

Even though my participants nearly universally talked about how futile academic methods were when they were adopted in high school, or college they look to them as the solution now. Many figure they were just not really motivated enough in high school or college, and now with their new integrative motivation, the methods will lead to a better result. Indeed, motivation was described at StepOut as being the most significant predictor of attainment. They also said “we weren’t immersed” in high school or college, and now that they are on their field sites, they will be immersed. Research from residential ESL programs in the United States has demonstrated that just because a learner is geographically located in a country, does not mean that they are really immersed in the host language of that country. Before arriving in the field, workers
expect that immersion will make all the difference, which explains their lack of interest in pre-field language learning, which is non-immersive by definition, and therefore less effective. What they do not grasp is just how non-immersed, especially those with families, they will be upon arrival, and how rigged for English use the power dynamics of local multilingualism and the organizational momentum of Love the World is.

Norton & McKinney (2011) acknowledge that motivation is insufficient to guarantee proficiency, and say that motivation should be replaced by investment (Norton 2005, 2008) as paradigm. Love the World learners are motivated to learn the language, although the ecological realities of their language environment work against their investment- a fact which has consequences for long-term retention. Citing several studies on ESL classroom data they find that “the English language learners in the class were not unmotivated; rather, it could be argued that they were not invested in the language practices of their classroom” (Norton & McKinney 2011:75). The “ecological realities” of Love the World field workers’ language environment, such as too much exposure to English speaking teammates, host nationals all too eager to speak English, too little guidance on how to seek out and effectively use host language input, all negatively affect their investment. Although highly motivated to learn the host language, their “investment” is in “doing ministry” and not in pursuing discomfort in the host language. “Doing language”, i.e. checking off activities that complete “language learning hours”, too often replaces authentic negotiated host-language mediated interactions where both parties are invested in a topic arising from a real exigence- a message they want to convey.

Minimally, if Mary is to succeed at robustly exposing new International Staff to a very different model of learnerhood, she needs more time and buy-in from the designers
of StepOut, and even from those who are responsible for the Sprint Brief, as that appears to be the most effective time for presenting a different model of learnerhood. Mary, in her own request to the designers of StepOut, argues for the following changes to the program, after StepOut 2010.

- **In order for Love the World to remain a leader in equipping our International Staff and reaching the world in their heart language, we need more thorough equipping in the area of Language Learning.** I recommend 4-5 mornings of teaching and 3-4 afternoons of working in small groups in their target language with a language helper and supervision from a trained language coach.

- **Here are some things that need to be included at StepOut:**
  - Learning Styles applied to Language Learning
  - a 1-to-1 time with a Language Coach (with a goal to continue a relationship like this during their intense Language Learning time overseas)
  - an overview of pronunciation to help them hear themselves
  - practicing how to train and work with a language helper

(Mary, letter to policy makers, StepOut 2010)

Some instruction on pronunciation and a one-on-one meeting with a language coach were incorporated into StepOut 2011. The more important point, the expansion of the language acquisition training component, was not adopted, and in fact the amount of time devoted to language learning was even reduced.

Jennifer, a long-term field worker in Slovenia, suggested, out of a conversation we had with new arrivals Erica and Kristin, that perhaps the best time for a language acquisition training would not be at StepOut at all, when so many other concerns are competing for new field workers’ attention, when language learning is a distant proposition, and learners are often naive about what the “ecological realities of their language environment” will be. She suggested that having a training three months after arrival would be more effective, allowing learners to experience the kind of catharsis which facilitates the adoption of a very different model of learnerhood. Giving people
two months to get established in the host country, and to get a sense of the realities of their situation, and to feel a felt need for the language might prepare workers to be more receptive to a two-week language acquisition training module. Language learning would be a reality at that point, fresh on their minds, and language coaches might more realistically be able to help them think through the available options, and more time could be devoted to presenting the GPA more in depth, for those who wished to take advantage of it.

### 9.3.2 How to better implement sociocultural methods

The GPA, while containing theoretical assumptions that are not universally accepted by language acquisitionists (see Table 5.1), has been proven to be an effective language learning methodology. Østby (2010) reports on the transformational effect the adoption of the method had on a language school in Addis Ababa, how morale of students and teachers, and the ultimate attainment of Amharic proficiency significantly increased when the older four-skills academic methodologies were replaced. Indeed, the learners who struggle the most with academic methodologies, who describe themselves as high-motivation but low-aptitude, describe their language difficulties in terms that would suggest that the GPA might be a more effective method. Struggling learners who find it difficult to memorize, or to see patterns, or have a preference for aural input over visual input, would work especially well with the GPA. The GPA’s strength is in being apprenticed to use language exactly as the target speech community would use it. Even high aptitude, academically successful learners report that although they can mentally construct an understandable sentence, that it often sounds awkward and “definitely not how a Swede would say it”. The propositional content can be conveyed, but the
pragmatic force, phrasing, and intonation are non-native-like. These are skills for which
the GPA has an advantage over explicit grammar and instruction, or metalinguistic
knowledge of patterns.

Although the GPA has potential to solve several recurring problems for at least
some learners, the organizational inertia is for academic learning involving metalinguistic
representations, inertia which fights against the GPA and sociocultural methods at all
level of the organization. Yet although a preference for “academic learning” seems
persistent and widespread within Love the World, there is ironically insufficient support
or the necessary consistent accountability for doing academic, metalinguistic, “cognitive”
learning well or consistently. The resistance to the GPA is both organizational and
internal, and Mary faces an uphill battle in advocating for this or other sociocultural
methodologies. After conducting the initial round of interviews and field visits in 2010,
Mary used my initial findings to advocate for the GPA and for the organization to devote
more energy to it. The following is an extract of a letter she sent policy makers
responsible for shaping StepOut.

From recent research done by Thor Sawin, a grad student working on his
PhD in linguistics, we know that 100% of the ICS he surveyed felt
positive about the GPA (half were in the field already and half were at
StepOut this summer) but most were running into challenges
implementing it or were unsure of how to implement it. The most
reported challenges were:
• Difficulty in finding and training a Language Helper in country
• Discouragement in LL generally
• Lack of support in country
• Too many responsibilities in English
  (Mary, letter to policy makers, 2010)

These very initial findings were indeed supported by more intensive interviewing and
field visits later on. It must be said that although my respondents “felt positive” about the
GPA, not even in those initial interviews did all respondents plan to use the GPA. Many, out of a perceived clash of “learning styles” suggested that they will stick with their plan for tutoring or classes, even though the GPA is a great method for “beginners”. The fact that it is seen as being more useful for absolute beginners seems to argue that it might be a better method to teach Sprinters than International Staff who often come in knowing the basics. Mary also reported another significant cause of resistance to the GPA.

Thor discovered that 50% had not done the Language Learning readings assigned them at StepOut—in other words, they did not read the Language Learning article for their level (20-30 pages) and so were coming to class fairly clueless. They heard about the method in class, participated in demonstrations and role-plays and then used it with a helper for a total of 4 hrs, but this is not enough! (Mary, letter to policy makers, 2010)

I discovered how limited a picture of the GPA is taught at StepOut, how the four hours is not enough, when I presented some of my initial findings at the ICLL conference on 2010. I presented the GPA as I understood it from StepOut, and from the descriptions of field workers, although, since the GPA is unpublished, I hadn’t read through Thomson’s book myself. After attending my presentation, Greg Thomson himself made me aware of several aspects of the design that I had misunderstood, and that were completely absent from the picture of the approach I had been exposed to within Love the World.

The personnel who oversee language learning at the regional office, when asked what they knew about the GPA and how it worked, said “almost nothing” and had a very vague sense of it, saying “I haven’t really seen it used”. At least partly because of this perception, the language acquisition portion was further trimmed in 2012 and 2013, where there will be just two half-days of language acquisition training. The organization seems to be moving in the direction of abandoning any training on language at StepOut,
and leaving it to individuals to fend for themselves upon arrival at the field sites, in consultation with their national staff.

Donna, a senior field worker in Italy, was also skeptical of the method, as she was unsuccessful in getting her own language tutor to employ the GPA methodology. “[Local tutors] do not... I tried to use some of the GPA stuff with [my tutor], but they do not get that, it does not fit with how they think it works. The stuff we do is kind of me-centered, but it’s hard to explain that to them”. Donna lists the following reasons as why the GPA will not work, or at least is not working, in Love the World. First, almost everyone at StepOut has done a different method already for 2-3 years. In other words, they already have a picture of what they want to do- a pre-existing model of learnerhood. Secondly, she feels that it “takes a lot of energy to become your own learner”. This relates to the resistance to learner autonomy described in Section 6.3.

Most importantly, Donna feels that because new field workers already did something else to learn the language, they come in with a class-biased philosophy of learning and a level, “people have only ever learned one way in school. The impression is that no one is using it. “That impression makes her feel “unwilling to go down the path. To switch takes an incredible amount of belief a leap of faith”. Describing the presentation of the GPA at StepOut, Donna’s account of what is going on in the mind of participants is different than Mary’s: “When Mary gets up to speak [StepOut participants] disregard it, no one they know likes it, or uses it. That’s what they’ve heard from people before arriving”. If participants aligned me very closely with Mary at StepOut, i.e. saw me as being “pro-GPA”, they might have been hesitant to disclose such perspectives to me, but I did not find direct evidence of them. For example, Donna said that a fluent field
worker, Brad, had tried to use GPA but it did not work. However Michael and Sara posited in interviews that Brad did use the GPA, “the StepOut method”, and that is why he got so fluent. Michael felt that because Love the World’s institutional culture supports classes (line 3) instead of the GPA (line 5), he:

1. would have to take a class
2. if we cannot get in that
3. that would be the expectation of the staff
4. so like the methods that we learned [at StepOut]
5. are not actually used to their...
6. I’m wondering
7. the guy who speaks language the best
8. he was at StepOut with me in 2006
9. so actually I wonder if he did the things
10. they learn to at StepOut first
11. because he learned language really fast
   (Michael, Italy, StepOut 2011)

In summary, if Love the World, or a region or nation within Love the World, decides to keep using the GPA, it might be more effective to move the GPA training either to Sprint Brief, or to a special conference near the end of their first few months in the field, when there is a keenly felt need for a method of language learning. If the training were done then, more attention could be paid to training workers on Phases 2-4, since the Phase 1 training modeled at StepOut is seen as too easy. Since learners are skeptical of learner autonomy, having a trained language nurturer to absorb some of the organization responsibility could help, preferably one who had gone through the official two-week training, and who could train other language helpers in it. This would remove the burden of organization from the learners, and create a scenario akin to Ostby’s language school in Addis Ababa. Having pre-designated nurturers at each field site would also solve the problem that nurturers tend to be flaky, and the sessions are easy to cancel by both parties.
Training nurturers is also important to deal with some weaknesses of the GPA which I observed in Lauren’s lesson in Section 9.1.2, namely the issues of bias toward low-frequency lexical items, and the fact that learners are unprepared to contend with morphosyntactic complexity. Both of these issues are likely to emerge in the prompt-based interactions (object manipulations, wordless picture books) in the GPA’s early phases. Pre-designated nurturers should not only be well-trained in the method, but also conscious about mitigating its weaknesses by focusing higher-frequency vocabulary first, and perhaps adapting principles from VanPatten’s Processing Instruction (such as putting the target form in initial position, or presenting one contrast at a time) when dealing with morphologically complex forms. Processing Instruction could easily be incorporated into the GPA, and balance learners’ natural bias toward focus on content “words”, with an interactive and useful

9.3.3 What is the basic unit of language acquisition?

One major theme in my study is the tendency, described in Sections 4.5.4, 4.5.5 6.6, to view ultimate attainment as merely a function of hours and years, merely “a matter of time” both in the sense of inevitability as well as in the sense of counting and making policies based on hours and years. While it is easier from a policymaker's perspective to make language learning a function of time, as time can apply to all workers in all field sites, this focus on time has unhelpful consequences. Because of the practices of counting language hours and years, both in organizational policy statements, and in the GPA methodology itself, learners are taught to think of advancement as proportional to time, in a similar manner to how Spanish 401 students would be presumed to all be ahead of Spanish 202 students at a university.
Field-based learners would be better equipped to make language learning decisions if they were given a more robust understanding of the role of input in language acquisition. While at StepOut, learners were exposed to teaching modules on motivation, affect, learning style, and pronunciation. However in all models, input is the driver of language acquisition (VanPatten and Williams 2007), and it might be worth equipping learners to understand that input in all situations is not ‘loaded’ equally. One “hour of doing language” could contain very different input than another. For example, Kristin in Slovenia considered looking at vocabulary flash cards for an hour as an hour of language learning, Jacob counted watching Slovak TV programs, Michael counted an hour of Rosetta Stone activities, and Mark counted an hour long conversation in a coffee shop, where English was used occasionally to scaffold comprehension. The input in these settings varies significantly in terms of number of repetitions of forms, amount of attention, modality of input, frequency of attended-to forms in the language’s lexicon, comprehensibility, opportunities for elaboration and negotiation. “Hours” thinking is problematic for attainment, because “hours” does not necessarily correlate with usable input. This also sets up an opposition in field workers’ minds between “ministry hours” and “language hours”. They want to “check off” their language hours so they can have more ministry hours, and their schedule gets divided between the language hours which they hate and which are hard to sell to supporters back home, and the ministry hours which they love and their supporters back home are excited to read about.

I would propose training people first to think of attainment not as “a matter of time” but as a matter of “helpful forms”. To be “helpful”, forms should be attended to, deeply processed, and then be accessed in a situation of true exigence. Exigence applies
the definition from rhetoric- “what prompts the author to write in the first place, a sense of urgency, a problem that requires attention right now, a need that must be met, a concept that must be understood before the audience can move to a next step” (Killingsworth 2005:26-27) - to speaking in the host language. A form needs to have been noticed, processed repeatedly in several different ways, and then accessed in a moment when a problem, need, or concept that must be understood “prompts the speaker to speak in the first place”. If learners were shown that not all input is created equally, and taught to focus on whether the input is attended to, processed, conversationally required, and then given opportunities for feedback in interaction, learners might orient toward richer exposure to input in their “language hours”. More importantly, learners could be shown how input gathered in their “ministry hours”, if such hours consist of interaction with host language speakers, could actually be more useful to their language acquisition than input gathered in their conception of “doing language” activities, activities rooted in their academic models of learnerhood.

Presenting input in this way would also set the stage for two further presentations. First, the GPA could be presented as a method which ensures that all input is attended to, deeply processed, interactionally required, and exposed to feedback and elaboration. This may convince more learners of the effectiveness of the GPA, giving them more to go on than “it is that method with pictures” as Jacob explained. GPA activities at different phases could be presented, focusing on demonstrating to learners how the GPA carefully controls input, and makes it maximally helpful to the construction of a second language grammar. Whether or not the sociocultural and Krashenesque assumptions of the GPA are true, the method is very effective in making input useable and useful to the learner in
constructing a new grammar. Second, teaching about input in such a way would lead to teaching learners to critically evaluate and better engage with classroom settings. In the classroom settings I observed, many of the forms in the input were not attended to by the learners, not repeated in several different forms or modalities, nor in ways that were conducive to deep processing. Additionally, there was little real conversational exigence for learners to access the forms. It is unsurprising that learners found themselves frustrated by the pedagogical outcomes, and began to engage in disruptive behavior. By training students to recognize the hallmarks of ineffective input, perhaps students can be trained to get more use out of existing classroom instruction, or seek out instructional opportunities where there is more useable input.

9.3.4 How can assessment be done in these situations?

As described in Section 6.4.2, assessment is a contentious issue within Love the World. The assessments that are most readily available, and which conform to the largely academic model of learnerhood in the organization are high-stakes, written-modality test which largely only measure formal accuracy and metalinguistic knowledge of the academic register of the prestige variety. These tests are seen as problematic for many reasons: field workers mostly need to control the informal, spoken variety of the language, they are focused on communicating in ways which are seen as culturally appropriate, which match host nationals’ “heart language”, and which open to them a role as a “legitimate peripheral participant” and potential confidant in the host culture. The high-stakes nature of the tests promotes anxiety and competition. These tests are turned to primarily because they are already in place, and because at some level assessment “means” a high-stakes written test, part of field workers’ learnerhood acquired from exposure to
language learning in the high school or university. Where such tests are in place, field workers rebel against them from underneath, and Mary, in accordance with Greg Thomson and the models of learnerhood circulating in the assemblage of missionary language learning depicted in Figure 4.3, actively discourages their use from above. Since such assessments are only advocated by a few national leaders, and for reasons which most field workers’ see as ill-conceived, Love the World then has its pendulum swung to the opposite direction, where assessments are avoided and seen as inherently counter-productive.

Yet many field workers desired some form of assessment, not one that would return a passing or failing grade, but just some way of measuring the progress that they were making. Jacob, the field worker who is struggling the most with language, said:

  I would love to have a measuring stick to show me if I am progressing or how I am progressing. Because if I had that, I know what I’m doing and not doing. Right now I do not have that. I do not have any tests or anything. So that would be like building a house you could see what you’re doing you might not even realize how him accomplishing things. If I do not know that I’m growing it’s not very encouraging. (Jacob, Slovakia, field interview 2012)

These types of comments were common, even among learners like Lucy in Sweden who had a high level of anxiety about language classrooms and testing, and were frustrated by their lack of progress. Kristina in Italy, struggling to study for the CILS exam designed for university students, also suggested that what she really needed was just a sense of progress, of what forms she had already acquired, and what forms she had been producing with inconsistent accuracy beforehand, but was now doing better on. This sense of “forward momentum” or “quick wins” as Mary put it in a letter to the StepOut design team, would encourage the learners. A clue about a model of assessment (line 10)
that might indeed fit this pattern was found in Theresa’s description of how her language
tutor discovered which forms (lines 7-8) Theresa needed to attend to next.

1 I realize after a while
2 I see [my tutor’s] method
3 because she’s starting to
4 a pattern where she’ll do conversation for a few classes
5 and then she’ll give homework for you every time
6 an essay
7 and then the next time she’ll sit down with a concrete plan
8 like we’re going to learn this this grammar you know
9 and then sort of I realized
10 that’s her way of testing me
11 instead of giving me a written test that’ll say I’ve passed
12 she’s looking to see if I’m ready to move to the next

(Theresa, Bosnia, field interview 2012)

Theresa’s tutor first listened to input spontaneously generated in interaction about real
topics, where the focus was on communication in response to an exigence, not on formal
accuracy. The tutor then began to keep a mental note of issues where Theresa’s Serbo-
Croatian was inaccurate, or inadequate to communicate the desired information. To
discern whether this was a result of on-line production limitations, an essay was assigned,
where Theresa had the opportunity to produce such forms in an off-line task design. Then
her tutor devised pedagogical interventions, which did include explicit metalinguistic
instruction and drilling to focus attention to and improve accuracy on the target form. All
of the respondents in Bosnia reported on how effective this tutor, a linguistics doctoral
student at a local university was, and how much language facility improved under her
tutelage, even in comparison to the more written-test assessment-oriented methods used
by the CMA.

To resolve the anxiety about assessment, and to provide the “measuring stick” and
a means of locating themselves in the “terrain of language learning” (described in Section
which learners request, I propose a two-pronged approach to assessment that would be relatively easy to implement. First, I propose assessing learners based on the ACTFL proficiency guidelines (http://actflproficiencyguidelines2012.org). There are already abundant materials to train native speaker informants to assess the various levels of fluency, and perhaps most importantly, there are samples in English which exemplify discourse at the various levels of proficiency. Rather than pay for a language test or test-preparation program, field workers could sit down with a national field worker who had been trained in assessing the ACTFL levels, and informally, in a conversation which attended to meaning, generate input in an on-line, lower-anxiety situation with a trusted informant. Using ACTFL would allow field workers to choose for themselves which of the four-skills they felt they needed for their jobs, and thus wished to be assessed for. The ACTFL has no pass-fail, but simply assigns learners a proficiency level. Having this done with regularity would allow learners to feel a sense of progress, as they moved from say intermediate-low to intermediate-high, giving them encouragement.

This would also be a low-stakes way of identifying those learners who had been in country for several years yet had plateued in terms of proficiency, those who have gotten “lost” “sidetracked” or “detoured” in the metaphor of language learning as terrain. Many workers talked about teammates who had leveled off at high beginner or low intermediate for years. Administering ACTFL assessments would help national directors to identify these stagnant learns, and design accountability and intervention for these learners in a way that is less face-threatening. Saying “I’m at intermediate mid in speaking” is also a more meaningful and translatable measure of proficiency than “I’m at Phase III in the GPA” or “I have to pass level 2 of TalkFreely” or “I passed the CILS
Test 3”. Neither the GPA nor tests like the CILS test all the skills that a learner may feel they need for their work. Most importantly, since there are samples of English discourse provided for the various levels, field workers would get a sense of what they sound like when they are speaking the host language, what kinds of limitations and difficulties are present in their own speech. Field workers could thus get a more accurate picture of how they come across in the host language, and appreciate the patience of their host language interlocutors in following through on a conversation at that level.

In addition to ACTFL assessment, once a year perhaps, a more focused assessment could be carried out. Again a conversation with a native speaker would be produced, but this time recorded and transcribed by a speaker of the host language. Mistakes in both formal accuracy, and awkwardness of expression could then be collected and tabulated. Perhaps this list wouldn’t be distributed directly to learners if it would judged to be too discouraging, but a set of general guidelines could be extracted out of the list, formulated as such “you really understand how to use avere in making past tense verbs, but still seem to be having trouble with when to use essere. Most of the time that does not block comprehension, but it would strike native speakers as a little odd, and could cause misunderstandings in the following situations…”. Encouraging speakers with what they have already acquired, selecting a few forms to focus on, and then motivating why those forms matter in conversation would be a useful form of assessment. A list of awkwardly expressed ideas, where clear L1 transfer is seen in how an idea was worded or structured, would be a great resource for the learners’ language tutors. If a learner said something like “I am hungry” instead of the more natural “I have hunger” or “I have a hard time with that” instead of the more natural “to me that is difficult”, the learner could
get feedback on how English and the host language differ not only at a lexical or grammatical level, but also at the level of pragmatics and set expressions, the kinds of differences that are most likely to create the impression of “non-native”.

If a learner’s accent is judged to be particularly difficult to understand, there are often programs which can measure the nativelikeness of intonational contours, such as the pronunciation modules within Rosetta Stone. Also, phonetic training which would focus on creating new phonemic contrasts has been judged to be effective (Flege 1995, Zybert 1997, Hardison 2005a, 2005b). Such phonetic training could be incorporated into individuals’ tutoring sessions. Giving the tutors a sense of inaccurate and non-native-like expressions, as well as goals for phonetic training, may also help solve the problem that many field workers reported, wherein since they were “clueless” about what to do with a tutor, the tutor turned to behaviorist grammar-translation methods and complex grammar charts to structure the tutor time, methods which did not expose learners to the kinds of noticed, processed, exigence-produced and elaborated input most helpful for growth.

9.3.5 How can organizations manage pre-field acquisition and on-field immersion?

Another area where Love the World could potentially implement changes, is to advocate for changing the time-frames and intensity of exposure to input. I will first talk about how pre-field acquisition might be managed, and then move on to discussing possibilities for immersion on-field, on or sometime after the time of arrival.

Pre-field acquisition is something seen to be of very little priority to workers who are still in the United States engaging in MPD, but which, in hindsight, they wish they had spent more time doing. When interviewed at StepOut, Jack felt: “Language is like the
lowest priority of all the other things we have to do (…) So I mean I haven’t thought about that much”. His wife Anelisa elaborated:

Practically, I feel like we’ve just had to deal- deal with so many different details, So many different things. Logistics and moving. And you know trying to raise our financial needs and making sure we have all our documents in order. We need extra copies of BIRTH certificates, kids’ and medical records. And just all kind of stuff. And so I feel like, at least for us, language is, **language is really not what we’re thinking about at all** (Anelisa, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

Their teammate Mark agreed:

And that’s why people do not do it. If I did not learn a word of language I could still move to another country. If you do not have your money you cannot move. If you do not figure out what to do with the house you own you cannot go on and move. If you do not pack your stuff you will not move. **But you can move with just like zero language.** So it’s not urgent. (Mark, Bosnia, StepOut 2010)

Yet Mark acknowledged that groups which support pre-field acquisition are very effective: “the Mormons… they’re fluent and you know, they do not dress as cool, and they ride bicycles but they are effective because they can speak the language”. Kathleen felt that “MPD has been top priority, number one priority- that takes precedence over language learning”, yet feels there might be some room for pre-field language learning, “but we also realize that it’s not full time, it’s supposed to be, but there’s lots of days where it does not end up being that way”.

This lack of focus on pre-field learning can come from past experience as Sprinters who did not know the language upon arrival: “I… I do not think either of us is too concerned or stressed out about learning language once we get there. And a lot of it’s from our past experience. You know we did not learn any language when we went the first time and it turned out fine you know and we work with you know” (Anelisa) or from the organization itself. Jim and Tara were discouraged from learning the language before
arrival because they were told “if it’s not a native Hungarian speaker we do not think that
you would be able to understand them or know what they’re saying”. Notice that this
view assumes there are no Hungarian native speakers in the United States.

While these workers’ sense of learnerhood, due to past experience and messages
from the organization about what their priorities should be pre-field, those who decided
to not do language learning wished that they had been upon arrival. Jacob, whose
difficulties in learning Slovak had their roots in his attitude and behavior as a Sprinter,
and his heavy reliance on English at his first arrival, recommends that people had done
some pre-field learning.

1 but even if they’re going full-time
2 for me
3 I would encourage them to learn a decent amount
4 get a good foothold
5 learn something in Slovak before you go
6 because then if you went
7 it would be really encouraging if folks could understand them
8 instead of going to the country where they do not know anything
(...)
9 when my marriage started
10 and I did not know that much about Slovaks
11 even now I do not feel like know that much about Slovaks
12 I would like to learn Slovak
13 as much Slovak as I could before I went
14 I would try to get crazy good there
15 you lead the best when you jump into it
16 when you’re using it all the time
17 for me it would be encouraging to learn some before I went
(Jacob, Slovakia, StepOut 2010)

In this extract from Jacob, the benefits of pre-field acquisition are apparent. The first is
the encouragement that would come from being understood. Second, Jacob alludes to the
fact that Sprinters would be more effective, and more willing to come back for a second
year, if they had higher proficiency. Even though he married a Slovak, he keenly feels
that his lack of Slovak keeps him from knowing much about Slovaks, from understanding
any of their conversations to each other. He sees this skill of knowing the culture from the very beginning being an important reason to have access to the language already upon arrival. He also feels like he could lead better if he knew the language, something Jacob routinely feels when in Slovak-language team meetings, where he feels like he cannot contribute or exercise his leadership. If students were given a list of phrases to discover with a native speaker, or using online lessons of basic phrases, or even made aware of relatively effective and easy-to-use resources like the Colloquial Language series, or Teach Yourself series, not only could learners experience the benefits which Jacob elaborates, but it would also increase their ability to be exposed to input.

Input begets output and output begets input. If learners were better able to use the input they receive upon arrival, as the result of even limited pre-field language acquisition, they would be able to use that comprehended input to pull even more input into the range of conversation. For instance, if a field worker with no pre-field training saw the sign <ремонт звуття> in the streets of Kyyiv, this sign provides little useable input. If a learner had learned the Cyrillic alphabet pre-field, a learner can mentally transliterate the sign to “remont zvuttya”. If, from visual context, it became apparent that the store had something to do with shoes, a learner could recognize the English cognate “remount” in the word “remont” and hypothesize that “zvuttya” means shoes, thus a shoe repair place, where shoes are “remounted”. This hypothesis could be tested in output, mediated either in English or in Ukrainian. Thus the form <звуття> with very minimal pre-field acquisition, gets turned from being discarded input to useable input, and long-term retention of that form, particularly if negotiated with an informant, is likely to occur.
Every form acquired pre-field has the attention to make many other forms discovered in the field accessible to their growing host language lexicon and grammar.

Ironically, adoption of current sociocultural methodologies works against supporting pre-field learning. In sociocultural methodologies, apprenticeship into behaviors, not mastery of forms, is the primary goal of language acquisition. By definition it would be impossible to be apprenticed into a host culture behavior by using a Teach Yourself Slovene CD back in the United States. Many field workers, did express this concern, that if they were to learn language at home, they might learn it wrong, or have a bad accent. There is little evidence though that the kinds of L1 phonological interference which create an accent would be less of an issue if field workers wait until arrival to begin learning. It also assumes that learners have no access to recordings of native speakers, or even opportunities to interact one-on-one with native speakers before arriving in the field. This is another instance where a plank of these workers’ learnerhood, namely that “language learning is better if you are immersed in it, the way a child is” leads to paradoxical conclusions. Because they do not see learning in the US as being “immersive” they do not expose themselves to input, which is the engine of immersion.

As I mentioned in Section 6.7, immersion is seen as being geographically located in the host country, not necessarily an experience where frequency and intensity of input is drastically increased. Field workers think they will be immersed in the host language simply by moving to the host country, when the reality is that they will almost certainly be immersed in English, because of the nature of their roles and team structure. Mark oversees many Sprinters, and I asked him about both pre-field learning and on-field immersion. He confesses that when he himself was a Sprinter in Croatia, he knew nothing
about the language upon arrival. When asked if he encourages Sprinters to learn any of
the language before arrival, he replied:

1 M: no I do not do any of that
2 I: would that be practical or do you think people would do that
3 M: to me obviously it would be nice if people showed up already
4 knowing how to speak a little bit of the language
5 I: maybe things like “kako si? kako ste? dobro”
   (How are you (inf.)? How are you (form.)? Good)
6 M: I wonder how valuable like 20 phrases would be
7 or something like that
8 or whether we should have like a
9 some kind of a immersion start
10 generally Sprinters
11 when they arrive
12 are overwhelmed with “where do I go to the grocery store?”
   (Mark, Bosnia, field interview 2012)

He acknowledges that Sprinters are overwhelmed with the realities of transition when
they arrive, and so not having any language when they first arrive, they often do not even
turn their attention to language learning until late-September, by which point the ministry
calendar has begun and it is even harder to spend time “doing language” since they need
to be “doing ministry”. Mark begins to wonder in this conversation, whether he could be
more intentional about forcing these newcomers to use the language right at the
beginning, of making them build more effective habits of trying to use Serbo-Croatian in
their first days.

13 M: they could take a language week where everybody goes out
14 and they have a long list of English words
15 they have to go and come back at the end of the day with answers to all that
16 and then talk about at the end of the day
17 and the next day to have a long list of English words
18 that they have to go discover
19 I: yeah I mean I do not think anyone is Sprinting in a language that nobody knows
20 someone in those places will know how to say these things in English
21 there might be something that they could do.
22 M: like you have to take a friend to the grocery store
23 well of course you’d need a friend
24 yet usually
but it could be like a language scavenger hunt week
go to the grocery store and here’s all these words you want to get
go to the grocery store and observe how people greet the checkout lady
or have them all come with recorders
and then have to record people saying it
I: as long as you could teach them a phrase like “what is this in Bosnian?”
M: što je to? (What is this?)
I: right. što je to na bosanski [sic] (what is this in Bosnian?)
M: kako te kažem … (How do you say…?)
(Mark, Bosnia, field interview, 2012)

This kind of activity could be even more effective if a passive comprehension of the
target forms was acquired before arrival, using a list, or even basic website. Then the
immersion activity could be one of newcomers turning what they had passively acquired
into active output, triggered by a real conversational exigence.

In conclusion, supporting pre-field acquisition would lead to better habit forming
in first days in the field, an increased ability to engage the culture, and mine it for sources
of language input. Pre-field learning and on-arrival immersion are possibly discouraged
because sociocultural theory leads to avoiding pre-field acquisition and the institutional
realities require newcomers to be incredibly busy with tasks, such that that there is no real
immersion when in the field. Learners would have to be intentional about seeking out a
Croatian language helper while living in San Francisco before arriving, but they have to
be just as effective when seeking one out in Zagreb. If these learners were indeed
targeting isolated languages with no communities of speakers, nor any language learning
resources available in the United States, the it’s “better to start learning when you get
there” mentality would make sense, but less so for a language like Hungarian with native
speaking communities, and resources available in almost any American bookstore. The
“wait ‘til you get there” mentality and learners belief in instant immersion by geography
also does not take into account the reality of a high penetration of English proficiency in
the host countries, and the frequencies of translanguaging practices, where resources from English and the host language are mixed. The instant immersion mentality is more reflective of an older conception of missionaries being sent to areas which are rural, monolingual in their native tongue, and do not speak a literary language. In order to be “really immersed”, Love the World needs to communicate to its field workers that geographic relocation will not result in immersion, and that if immersion is to be done, there needs to be a concerted effort to develop true immersion experiences, where learners have no other responsibilities than to attend to language, and where they are isolated from other English-speaking expatriates.
10. FUTURE DIRECTIONS AND THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

In this final chapter, I first summarize the main findings about learnerhood specifically in the Love the World context. Next, I present some theoretical implications of the study for SLA theory, applied sociocultural pedagogy and language learning in transnational organizations. This is followed by suggestions for future studies, and a final section which speculates on the larger context of second language learnerhood in the missions and development assemblage.

10.1 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS ABOUT LEARNERHOODS IN LOVE THE WORLD

First, larger *ideologies of language and personhood influence and constrain* the learnerhoods of field workers. Across all levels and along the trajectories of association with Love the World, conflicting ideologies tug on each worker’s learnerhood. In one ideology, language is located within the mind of an individual learner, a learner who has academic skills and a particular “learning style”. In this ideological complex, learners have the goal of acquiring a complete linguistic system, a “heart language”. This “heart language” is fed by learners memorizing words and acquiring academic knowledge, and the heart language unlocks the souls of speakers of a language, since the language is co-extensional with the culture, nation-state and soul of the “host national”. This ideology favors individual learning and academic pedagogies. The other ideology situates the language within the distributed cognition of social networks at the field site; the language is not made of forms, but practices and behaviors. In this conceptualization,
which fits within sociocultural theory and the sociolinguistics of globalization, the goal for learners is not “a language” but ways of doing language which accomplish social actions in a native-like way. The goal of this view is not unlocking the souls of host language speakers, as much as performing tasks in a “normal” way. The ideologies overlap in the GPA, and in the ways that language learning is presented to field workers, but they also contradict each other in terms of the preferred channels for and the nature of linguistic input.

Second, **Love the World tends to conflate grammatical and pragmatic knowledge with content knowledge.** With their overriding focus on “learning styles” and “personality types”, they assume that learners are the individual possessors of discrete units of language knowledge, and that each person has their own optimal way of acquiring that knowledge. While such individual traits may be especially relevant for memorizing lexical items or automatizing lexical retrieval (O’Malley & Chamot 1990, Ellis 1994), they are less relevant, and potentially distracting when acquiring grammatical knowledge. Generativist, interactionist and sociocultural theories all agree that the grammatical knowledge of a second language, consists of more than isolated form-meaning pairings, but is a complex organically grown mechanism which emerges from host language input-in-interaction. Since policy makers are largely unaware of the important theoretical differences between content knowledge and productive language knowledge, the policies drive learners towards individualized cognitive strategies rather than intentional interactional ones.

Third, **learners tend to rely on models of language acquisition** based in their academic experiences as high school and college students. This is despite their own
judgment that those methods are ineffective, and not extremely motivating. This reliance on academic models, which involve four-skills instruction, explicit grammar instruction, occurs despite the zeal for sociocultural methods in the assemblage of missionary/development language learning. Local inertia for philological and metalinguistic models of language acquisition in Eastern Europe also favors these academic methods in tutorial and classroom settings. These learners also focus on and orient towards lexical knowledge, drilling vocabulary in their uninflected forms, over knowledge of morphosyntax and syntactic argument structure. For them language learning often “means” word learning.

Fourth, “sociocultural” pedagogical methods such as the GPA have potential to address some of the problems faced by learners. They can be adapted to any language, are flexible, allow learners to hone in on only those repertoires and skills they need to learn, motivate self-described “low aptitude learners”, tie L2 forms to experiences rather than to L1 forms, and create rich opportunities for interaction and negotiation. However, the GPA requires more preparation than academic instruction; the learner has to take charge of their own language learning project, and can’t outsource responsibility to a tutor or a school. The method also requires learners to take responsibility for lesson preparation and gathering materials, unless they can find a language school, such as the one Østby (2010) described which use the method, or a pre-packaged curriculum like “TalkFreely”.

Even for learners, like Simon, who did have access to a pre-prepared sociocultural curriculum (TalkFreely) and well-trained tutors, he still felt unable to grasp the method’s principles, which he could not get to work. A bigger obstacle is that buy-in for the GPA
is inconsistent across the organization; Mary’s advocacy for it is stymied by skepticism and resistance at more local scales. For learners, the risks of using a method they only partially understand seem greater than the rewards, especially since few have a model of a speaker who learned only using the GPA. A larger concern is that methods like the GPA may not in fact be as sociocultural as they claim. At least as experienced by Love the World participants, the GPA may more reflect learner-drivenness and an American preoccupation with choice. Sociocultural methods are seen as “fitting a certain learning style” in a marketplace of methodologies, and the depth of embodied apprenticeship assumed by Vygotskian models of learning is often not present in the implementations of the GPA. Learning via TPR is not the same as embodied learning, and the GPA’s language of apprentice agency, “taking ownership of your learning” and “learner-drivenness” conflict with ideologies of “apprenticeship”.

Fifth, host nationals’ desire to accrue linguistic capital by exploiting the indexical values of English use (cosmopolitanism, authority, education), combined with the high degree of penetration of English at the various field sites, pushes the code choice toward English in complicated interactional dynamics. This coupled with team duties that immerse field workers in English lead to a lack of exposure to usable input. Although Love the World’s assumption is that field workers “are immersed in language”, the reality is much different. In such circumstances, geographical location in a host country does not automatically lead field workers to be noticing, comprehending, deeply processing, recalling and using the host language forms they are surrounded with.

These phenomena, plus an overriding ideology of filling up “hours” and “years” with a wide range of ad hoc language learning activities, coupled with naïveté about what
sorts of input are most useful for acquisition, combine to yield a **slower and less complete acquisition of the host language** than learners predicted. Love the World’s emphasis on fostering emotional health (which can backfire by leaving unsupported workers to their own devices) also can retard language acquisition. If field workers were on smaller teams, were more integrated into host language input, were in settings with lower English proficiency, or had come to the field already having communicative ability (even if limited) in the host language, some of the problems of morale and longevity arising out of isolation from host language input could be avoided. An early finding that I need to pay attention to more is how motherhood complicates the master-apprentice relationships assumed by sociocultural theory, and isolates women from host language input. In some cases, this slower and less complete acquisition yields a highly truncated repertoire, built around discourse markers, transactional skills and small talk interactions. This repertoire suffices for the first several years, even impressing some host nationals by signaling the field workers’ positive orientation toward the host country, and upending regional assumptions about American visitors. Eventually though, the persistence of these truncated repertoires leads to a critical point, where field workers get repositioned from being “guests” to being “immigrants”, and host nationals are less impressed by or patient with the amount of truncation. Isolation from host language conversation and interaction, which enabled the truncation to persist, can lead to lowered morale and leaving the field.

10.2 **Theoretical implications**

10.2.1 Implications for bridging cognitive and social perspectives in SLA

This study, while drawing on insights from the fields of sociolinguistics and second language acquisition, is an atypical study for both fields. Much of the work which
has sought to chart the intersection between these fields focuses on the implications of language variety for classroom instruction (Hornberger & McKay 2010, Jenkins 2006), attitudes towards non-native speech (Bayley 2000), or the role of L1 transfer in shaping learner variation (Kasper 1996). The field of SLA would be enriched from doing more situated studies of learners, which are longitudinal not only in studying interlanguage development, but also on the consequences of language learning for learners life trajectories and abilities to act, by way of newly-acquired if truncated repertoires, in the social life of their field sites (advocated by Firth & Wagner 1997, Rampton 1997). As sociolinguistic approaches to SLA move away from the model of acquired bilingualism (Young 1999) to translanguaging and repertoires (i.e. the deployment of an array of resources for an array of social ends), developmental SLA theory needs to theorize how to incorporate these perspectives (Creese & Blackledge 2010).

It is also too easy for sociolinguists and linguistic anthropologists to ignore the insights and perspectives of SLA theories about cognition and learner-internal development (noted as early as Preston 1993, also Long 1997, Kasper 1997). If indexicalities get created for every form in an interaction, then even unconscious errors, whether arising from transfer, production, competence or wild grammars, would have a social life. Although a speaker may not be creatively or productively using indexicality when producing an unconscious “error”, social meanings related to who would make that kind of error, and for what reasons, nevertheless get invoked. Cognitive perspectives to SLA have delivered constructs such as fossilization, aptitude, the natural order hypothesis, and frequency effects. All of these constructs play a role in constraining the forms which come out of a learner’s mouth (or fingers). In a repertoire analysis framework, each form
is chosen by an agentive speaker, selected for its situated indexical, pragmatic, as well as referential content. Each form also triggers important social consequences. If this framework is true, then constructs from cognitive SLA and from theoretical analysis of pedagogy which determine or constrain the production of forms should not be excluded from either the “social turn” (Block 2003) or “semiotic turn” (DeCosta 2010) of SLA.

In a purely cognitive or interlanguage approach to SLA, grammatical system is to blame for an “error”, a system divorced from a social context. Young (2009) notes that in an identity framework to SLA on the other hand, “since the speaker’s sign generates a new sign for the hearer, the ‘Who?’ the ‘Where?’ and the ‘When?’ of the interaction are crucial in semiotic communication. Somewhere, somewhen, and somebody are thus indispensable features of communication, and they contrast with the nowhere, nowhen, and nobody of Saussurean theory” (13). A form can only be judged as “erroneous” in the context of a particular time, place and register; the judgment depends also on the ‘somebody’, the collective agreement of a community.

Looming over this study is the theoretical question of whether there is a “strong analogy” between adult language learning and child language learning. While language socialization scholarship (such as Ochs & Schieffelin 1996) may be careful to distinguish children and adult practices, sociocultural perspectives in SLA, and especially methodologies such as the GPA assume that human learning proceeds along the same lines, regardless of the age of the learner. Cognitive theorists posit a completely different kind of acquisition, and different tools for incorporating input into a mental model for children and adults. This question has ramifications for sociolinguistics and linguistic
anthropology, and ethnographies of learners might help psycholinguistic researchers better answer this important theoretical question.

10.2.2 Implications for applying sociocultural methods

It is ironic that although sociocultural methods, which focus on learners’ acquiring truncated repertoires as needed, are being used in the missions/development enterprise, there is still an overpowering ideology of language as a whole system, bounded, intact, linked to a nation, a culture, and a soul. Such ideology has a historical trajectory tracing back to Herder and European romanticism, exported via colonialism (Woolard & Schieffelin 1994:60), and actively adopted by nation building and language revitalization projects in the European context (Kataoka et al. 2013:5). Just as Miki Makihara (2013) shows that passive competence in a language or hybridized registers are devalued against the backdrop of language revitalization projects, the same phenomena are devalued within the assemblage of missions and development workers, because of the whole system, “one language, one culture” ideology. If a learner doesn’t acquire the whole system, doesn’t acquire fluency, they can feel like they have failed. Guilt in such cases can equally arise either from a model that is program-driven, such as a language school, or from a model that is individual driven, such as the GPA, PILAT or LAMP.

Although learners may themselves ascribe to fluency, without a clear understanding of what fluency is, sociocultural methodologies only promise to deliver mastery of certain truncated repertoires. All speakers’ repertoires are truncated, a fact which upsets the division between native and non-native speakers of language, but not every truncated repertoire of a language learner is truncated in the same way or to the same extent. One socially meaningful way that a repertoire can be judged to be truncated
is if it has errors in formal accuracy. Formal accuracy has a social life in two senses, it 
exists as a societal construct representing beliefs about stabilized ways of speaking, and it 
also affects the abilities of individuals to rhetorically engage their environments on a 
micro-interactional level.

Communicative competence (Kataoka et al. 2013) is not the same kind of 
knowledge as other kinds of knowledge these workers are expected to acquire 
(theological knowledge, academic knowledge, financial knowledge). Love the World 
expects and provides strict accountability in fields of spiritual health, financial health, 
communication with supporters and theological orthodoxy, yet language learners are 
often left to their own devices. Perhaps since the organization grew up overwhelmingly in 
the English-speaking world, language learning is not as well-theorized as those other 
fields, and communicative competence, the organically grown second language grammar, 
is treated as if it were a set of propositions or procedures, rather than a matter of 
sociocognitive development. An emerging perspective on communicative competence is 
that it differs from other kinds of competence, not only in that it is an “organically grown 
grammar”, but that any measure of competence must be situated, contingent, and 
therefore ephemeral. “Communicative is at once the product of moment-by-moment 
egotiations within the act of communication and large-scale social structures, historical 
dynamics, and the actions and ideologies of institutions like the state. (Kataoka et al.2013:4)”

10.2.3 Implications for transnational organizations

In the one area of language acquisition, Love the World shows extreme flexibility. 
This flexibility, vis-à-vis other “hard core” organizations, is seen by many Love the
World field workers as positive. Yet the flexibility results in learners poorly equipped to embark in successful language acquisition, and pursuing host language proficiency in ways that are at odds with key findings of SLA theory. This flexibility--raise your own support, do your own language--is analogous in some ways to the just-in-time, niche market models found in neo-liberal capitalism. Language acquisition policy is devolved to more local levels, where it can be addressed more “efficiently” with local know-how, yet these are levels at which decision makers have the least access to resources from SLA theory and best practices. As a result learners can only blame themselves, get frustrated with the organization, or adjust their model of learnerhood so that language acquisition is not that important to be a good field worker, after all. Transnational organizations do need some flexibility when it comes to language learning, but they need to provide structures of accountability.

An organization might function better if there is a plan about where to concentrate expertise about language acquisition, i.e. promote intentional language acquisition training and have trained language acquisition experts either at the global level, or at each of the regional level or national level headquarters. The disadvantage of the global level is that there is a diversity of experiences- at the StepOut training many of the field workers are headed to English-speaking countries, so there is pressure to not spend too much time on language learning which is inapplicable to a large portion of each cohort. The disadvantage of the national level is that a huge number of language experts would need to be trained and equipped; the large number of centers would take away from the advantages of concentrating expertise and resources. It seems to make sense to structure accountability and pool knowledge at the regional offices. Rather than letting each nation
set its own policy, having a consistent enforceable policy at each region, coupled with field workers trained in basic principles of language acquisition, as well as conversant in sociocultural methods (through attending a PILAT or official GPA training), might better serve Love the World field workers. Rather than use national academic tests like the CILS, a system of measuring progress through conversation could be organized at the regional level, and consistent policies encouraging early immersion experiences and some pre-field language acquisition could be developed.

10.3 LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations. My original plan for a neat cross-sectional and longitudinal design broke down, as participants arrived in the field all at different times, due to financial and visa issues. For instance, Erica and Kristin were to have arrived in Ljubljana in September 2011, but did not arrive until April 2012, just before my field visit. Eric and Amelia were to have arrived in Hungary in September 2011 as well, but only came in May 2012, after my field visits had been completed. Although I was able to collect a StepOut interview, a follow-up Skype interview, and a field visit from a large number of participants, the timing between these three events varied among the participants, and I used information sent in support letters to try to fill in data between those three snapshots.

The amount of ethnographic depth I was able to achieve at each field site was also limited by the fact that my original plan for three months of field work had to be compressed into seven weeks. Although those weeks were very carefully structured so as to maximize opportunities for data collection each day, the kinds of connections that occur from serendipity over the course of months at a field site had less chance of
occurring over the course of a week. As my unit of ethnographic analysis was not a single field site, but an entire organization however, it was imperative that I visit not only several field sites, but also the nodes that dominated them in the hierarchy of the organization.

Another limitation is in the applicability of my results within Love the World. My study is limited to the Eastern European and partly the Western European regions. While the Sprint and StepOut trainings are the same for field workers being sent to all regions, the models of learnerhood which develop in the field in Eastern Europe are almost certainly different than those that evolve in the Latin American or South Asian regions, where English has a different role, the languages are difficult in different ways, and local ideologies about language learning and personnel management are undoubtedly different.

10.4 Future studies

Throughout this dissertation, several promising directions for further research have presented themselves, which would allow for a more accurate picture of how second language learnerhood forms in field workers and is distributed within organizations than the limited picture that I was able to achieve in this study.

10.4.1 Compare with other regions

Apart from Sweden, Italy and Germany, the data in this study all comes from Eastern Europe. The Eastern European region is unique in that the languages are morphologically complex, yet contain many cognates with English. Also, the level of penetration of English is relatively high across the region, and the national languages tend to have less than thirty million speakers. This means that the linguistic capital of national languages like Hungarian or Slovak, proportional to the number of non-native yet
proficient speakers of the language, would be in the rank of “central languages” rather than a “super-central language” (after DeSwaan 2001) like Arabic or Spanish. In regions where the host language is a “super-central language”, more able to compete with the “hyper-central language” of English, the dynamics and perceived necessity of host language proficiency would be different. From a repertoire perspective, which eschews talking about “languages” and instead looks at the scalar circulation of forms, forms originating in Spanish, Swahili or Arabic would circulate more widely, across a greater range of communicative contexts than forms originating in Lithuanian or Macedonian. Circulation is related to currency, both in the sense that forms can travel, but also in the sense that they have worth, and can be “cashed in” to serve transactional and identity aims.

Arabic or Spanish forms would be more “current” in this sense; in order to get a full picture of learnerhood, even just within Love the World, data from these other regions needs to be compiled and compared with Eastern Europe. My inclusion of data from Western Europe, from German and Italian, languages with arguably wider circulation, higher currency, and greater linguistic capital, is a step in that direction. The Oceania, South Asia or West Africa regions differ in the opposite direction. In some countries the “national” languages are “peripheral” languages in DeSwaan’s system, and have even less currency than Serbo-Croatian or Swedish, with eleven million speakers and a literary tradition. In such countries, “national languages” like Tongan (Besnier 2013), Fijian (Shameem 2004) or Maltese (Camilleri 1996) are undergoing even more intense contact with English than Hungarian or Georgian are. It would be interesting to see if, when English is even more widely spoken than in Eastern Europe, Love the World
workers spend less energy on trying to learn another language, and feel less conflict if they do not acquire it. It is unclear whether the notion of utility would trump the strong “heart language” ideology. A tantalizing clue is that many missions workers in Kazakhstan learn Russian, a language with wider currency, although Kazakh would more properly be considered the “heart language” of many. Missionaries who learn Russian justify their choice by claiming that for Kazakhs, Kazakh is seen as a restricted language, and not the preferred one for academic or philosophical discourse (Dwight Grdin, personal communication at ICLL conference). The consequences for morale and longevity of not learning the “heart language” may be less in countries where English is spoken by a wider spectrum of the population, especially those parts of the population which are most valorized, as in Tonga (Besnier 2013).

In other regions, such as North Africa and some regions of Latin America and East Asia, English is less-spoken than in Eastern Europe, and extensive language industries exist centered on the teaching of the host language (Heller 2010). Indeed, in many of these countries the only way to legally gain access as faith-based workers is on a language-learning visa, participating in highly-structured language programs housed in academic institutions, which may or may not have exposure to recent developments in second language acquisition research or pedagogical methods. It would be interesting to see whether the same dynamics of code-choice emerge in these settings- do participants continue to seek out English-speakers? Or does, in these areas, geographical relocation lead to immersion learning?
10.4.2 Compare with another organization

Love the World is connected to many other organizations within the assemblage of World Evangelicalism. Contacts between organizations are mostly forged at the level of global leadership, through gatherings of leaders of evangelical organizations, or at the local level, as field workers interact with each other in local churches, private schools, expatriate restaurants and bars, English schools and embassy functions. In this study I have found that workers in other organizations perceive Love the World as “reaching the fringe”, “bad at language learning”, and “not good at working with churches”, while Love the World field workers perceive other organizations as being “too strict” “hard core” “they give you less to do at first”. It would be instructive to do a study of a similar organization, with workers in similar locations, and with similar goals to Love the World, but one which has a more unified language policy, which includes assessment and accountability, and which has more leverage to enforce their policy. This would allow for the kind of comparison between Love the World and another organization in terms of learnerhood as Michel & Wortham (2009) makes between Individual Bank and Organizational Bank in terms of managing uncertainty. It would be interesting to see how the desires to use English of host nationals and field workers alike are managed by a more centrally controlled organization.

A different target population may also make a difference. If an organization was targeting rural or disadvantaged populations, the consequences for learnerhood might be much different than for Love the World who tends to target high school and university students, as well as young professionals. Until such a comparison is made, it is difficult to know which of the insights gained in the present study also apply to other large missions.
and development organizations, let alone to the entire set of non-faith-based transnational non-governmental organizations.

10.4.3 Effectiveness of sociocultural pedagogies

One potential contribution to the field is to analyze the effectiveness of pedagogies explicitly rooted in sociocultural theory. I originally hoped that this study could at least test the effectiveness of Greg Thomson’s Growing Participator Approach. However, since the approach was variously uptaken and relatively infrequently applied as Thomson originally intended, this study is of limited value in proving or disproving the effectiveness of the approach. Perhaps the lack of uptake itself might be seen as reflecting the ineffectiveness of this method. Yet reports sent back to MTI from learners who have used the sociocultural PILAT program, along with reports shared at ICLL of learners who successfully applied the GPA, and the positive if early progress made by Lauren, the only participant I interviewed who fully implemented the GPA, hint at the promise sociocultural methods may have. This method may particularly benefit learners who do not enjoy academic methods, and see themselves as “primarily relational”.

Doubts about such methods are also widespread in the missions and development world, especially among language school operators who teach languages with a long tradition of literacy and instruction. The director of one language school (anonymous for security reasons) popular among faith-based missions and development workers expressed some of his reservations about sociocultural methods (GPA, PILAT, and even LAMP still) which are de rigueur in these large organizations. The following is a list of doubts that director has about the GPA:
• Why should we put so much effort into equipping users to implement an approach (designed for use with many languages) if they are only attempting to learn one language?

• I also think naive new people are sometimes blown away with all they can get at this early level (like they are with TPR), but have no idea that one is quite limited in what he can learn (and efficiency of learning) this way.

• I am cynical about teacher-driven approaches, because teachers have their own agenda. About learner-driven approaches (as opposed to program-driven approaches) [because] I have seen plenty of people in their first year or so here, starting out very motivated and full of energy, but pretty soon, when the difficulties of life in a new culture, and the difficulty of a complicated and tough language overpower that initial rush, something more is needed. Learners need a program and accountability partners (usually provided by organizations), and sometimes motivation from teachers and classmates, to keep them going.

• If your goal is to learn the language, and not perform some experiment, then use whatever you can find that will make it more efficient. “Rules”, charts and so forth are all shortcuts that help us remember things or get them out before we are able to reason them out. I see drilling the same way.

• My concern is that some people are avoiding the less savory aspects of language learning to try something that sounds more fun, but is not really helping them make adequate progress. Most people do not like drilling or learning grammar rules. But I still think they are important. If you want to play a musical instrument skillfully, or become a competitive athlete, you will have to do a lot of things that are not enjoyable, but you do it for the joy of achieving your goals.

• GPA learners have a lot of holes. As an example, a guy came in last week to enroll at [our school] after four years of GPA study (albeit not full-time). I put him into third level, although I could have just as easily put him into second. [A learner who used only our school’s methods], for example, after only nine months, was at the same point. I really believe that ordinary adult learners need explicit instruction on the structure of a language, especially one that is so different from their first language. (Letter from a director of a language school for field workers, 2013)

Despite the strengths of the GPA in ensuring that input is well-used, and in “sounding fun” this director, who plays an important role in language training, is skeptical of the method,
as are many language school directors and language acquisition policy makers. Indeed, most learners in Love the World tend to gravitate toward the kind of program-driven model offered here, which incorporates explicit instruction, rules, charts, drilling, classrooms with teachers, and regular assessments of both oral and written production. However I have not been able to find any non-anecdotal studies which compare sociocultural instruction, using the GPA, with academic instruction controlling for population. This study has generated transcripts of GPA lessons, which can be analyzed at a micro-level focusing on the kinds of input, interaction and feedback which learners received. Such analyzed transcripts could be compared with transcripts of tutoring sessions using traditional methods.

A comparison might focus on acquisition of a single structure, and how native like it occurs in the spontaneous production of learners. For instance, in the GPA, learners would be exposed to all case endings from the very beginning, without even knowing that such a thing as “case” exists. Most traditional learning materials try to take into account research (Thompson 1990, Rubinstein 1995) showing the genitive is almost always the first acquired or noticed by learners before dative case, and use various means, such as contrasting sentences, bold type, sentence positioning, charts, metalinguistic explanations, to draw learners’ attention to the structures which contain evidence of the genitive case. The GPA does offer repetition, and rich processing of forms, which are essential to acquisition, but learners do not have access to those other forms of mediation which help them know what a case even is, let alone what the genitive case does. In short, learners do not find out that there are cases, they are not necessarily flooded with input of
genitive case forms first, and even when they are exposed to input containing the genitive case, their attention is often elsewhere, on vocabulary or stock phrases.

A set of structures with no apparent surface relation, which are nevertheless unified in that they represent the same morphological category (such as the feminine, masculine, singular, plural, regular and irregular forms of genitive case), may not be unified in the minds of learner using the GPA. Without explicit instruction to connect them, GPA users are left to acquire each of those structures separately, only later perhaps realizing that they fall under the same umbrella of genitive case marking. Also, they may acquire genitive endings as phonetic material in fossilized constructions, or chunks, unable to isolate or analyze the genitive ending and apply it to a novel utterance. The GPA teaches learners to imitate what they have heard their nurturer say, as part of its silent period and understand-do-say methodology. It is unclear then how such learners would create novel utterances involving the recombination of morphemes which had only been heard before as parts of set chunks or phrases.

A study which focuses on these issues might be able to weigh in on the larger sociocultural vs. cognitive debate within the field of second language acquisition, and fill in the gap in empirical studies of sociocultural theory created by the fact that the environments which are most conducive to research (i.e. university language programs) are often the least conducive to sociocultural methodologies.

10.4.4 Code choice analysis

Another important study, which I have begun to undertake, is an analysis of the code-choices in interactions, and the indexical meanings attributed to/presupposed by these code choices. Urciuoli (1991) noted that English use has an entirely different
meaning and indexicality for Nuyoricans depending on whether they think of it as being spoken by black, white or Hispanic Americans. Blommaert’s (2005) proposes the idea of ‘layered simultaneity’; discourse forms occur both synchronically, and across several layers of historicity. A form can have multiple indexicalities depending on which historical “conversations” or systems of indexicality, are evoked to frame the discourse. Different indexical meanings are presupposed by or attributed to forms then depending on which group of speakers or which historical frame is activated. Another possible frame within the sociolinguistics of globalization is that of geographical scales (Blommaert 2010). The indexical meanings a form is given will depend on the scale invoked, whether the form is seen as being uttered in a local, national, regional or global context. For example English forms would have a different indexical value, depending on whether they were selected by the field worker or host national, and depending on which scale (Blommaert 2007a) was being invoked via accent, conversational topic, or other semiotic cues. If a host national chose to use English with a field worker in a café in Croatia, the indexical meanings of this code choice might have the following resonances, as the café table is located in personal space, in a city, in a country, in a region, and in a world.
TABLE 10.1: Indexical meanings of English at different nested scales

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale invoked</th>
<th>Indexical meaning of English use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Personal space:</strong></td>
<td>“I choose English in order to...”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>having a conversation around a cafe table</td>
<td>...make my friend who is struggling to learn a difficult language feel more at ease. Using English is easier for them, and I can tell they are having a bad day.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local space:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>having a conversation in Zagreb</td>
<td>...show that we here in the capital are educated people, who speak English well, unlike the peasants in the country who have a hard time even speaking Croatian correctly.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>National space:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>having a conversation in Croatia</td>
<td>...extend hospitality to a foreigner in my country. It reflects well on my country that I speak good English and can introduce foreigners to our national culture and ways. I might incorporate a few words and phrases from Croatian for concepts that are unique to Croatia and part of shared daily life in Zagreb, however.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>European space:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>having a conversation in the European Union</td>
<td>...show that I am a European, a citizen of the EU’s newest member state, connected to European government and educational institutions. I might use British accented forms, as a pan-EU norm.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Transnational cosmopolitan space:</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>having a conversation in a world whose networked places are easily traversed, and whose media products are easily exchanged</td>
<td>...build solidarity and achieve equality with my friend here. We are both independent global agents, multilingual, able to move across borders, consumers of a global media and technology culture. I may slide in cultural references to American movies, shows and bands, as well as allusions to technologies which show that I am a well-informed global citizen.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These geographically nested indexicalities engender different indexical meanings for selecting English as a code. There would be a corresponding set of scaled indexical meanings for the choice to use the host language, or indeed to mix forms from the repertoires of both. Yet these indexical meanings alone do not determine code choice; forms can be used creatively or humorously in ways which play with these indexical systems (“creative indexical effect” Silverstein 2003, “bricolage” Eckert 2008).
Indeed, the dynamics behind the "everyone speaks English" mentality need more careful analysis and understanding in specific locales. Kataoka notes that in the case of Tonga, English has local resonances in addition to global ones, not so much as a "result of Tongans’ increasing use of English alongside the local Polynesian language Tongan (although this is indeed the case), but the effect of their ideological construction of competence in English having specifically local characteristics" (Kataoka et al 2013:5).

What local ideologies for English competence are at play in the Croatian café? What does it mean for a trans-national agent like these Love the World field workers to choose to use a highly truncated repertoire of Croatian instead? How does this choice re-position or re-scale their Croatian conversation partner? Are these re-positionings accepted or contested? The data from this study could be used to shed important light on these questions.

10.4.5 The Anglicization of European evangelicalism

Another insight from the sociolinguistics of globalization is the notion of polycentricity, that there are different "centres" in a given setting, which have the power to exert authority over a given conversation (Blommaert 2010). Each of these centers is associated with a set of linguistic features, and in order to effectively "orient" toward that centre, thereby accruing the power it contains, those linguistic features have to be checked off. While work has been done in the Eastern European context documenting the English associated with various centres of authority, including global mass media (Pennycook 2007), European educational norms, and the language industry (Rehm and Uszkoreit 2013), relatively little academic attention has been paid to the creation of a new center for English in Eastern Europe, a centre which has the power to exert authority over
speakers choices to use English, and over their choices of English language forms and repertoires. The presence of these English-speaking field workers however alters the linguistic landscape of European evangelicalism and the indexical values of English used in evangelical spaces, creating a new centre (Blommaert 2007) for English use.

In the course of this study, and in my earlier years of living in Eastern Europe, I have had the opportunity to attend religious services and other functions at evangelical churches and community centers all over Eastern Europe. It is striking how present English is at such sites. Many evangelical pastors are from English speaking countries, were converted by English-speaking missionaries after the fall of communism, or received theological training in English. Those pastors who preach in the host language often provide simultaneous or consecutive translation into English, as evangelical communities draw not only missions and development workers from North America, or professionals from countries like Norway and the Netherlands with high evangelical percentages, but also refugees and international students from the “Global South”, primarily of African and Asian backgrounds. Spolsky (2003) notes that religion is often a site of language contact, and in evangelicalism, English seems to be functioning as something more than just a lingua franca between churchgoers of different L1s. Since almost all of the Christian materials made available at such churches are translations of books written by American authors, or indeed the English language originals, since the posters advocated American-style evangelical camps and concerts, since almost all the songs sung in the church are (sometimes awkward) translations of songs written in English.
English also becomes a kind of quasi-liturgical language (Ramshaw 2000). In order to fully access the meanings and texts which constitute evangelicalism, knowledge of English is almost indispensible. The host language materials, such as those in Slovene, tend to be forced and non-rhyming translations of songs, presented alongside the original English lyrics, a Slovene bible that is hundreds of years old, and thus difficult to understand, or Slovene simultaneous translation of an English-language sermon, translation which is often hurried and humorless. These practices seem to privilege the position of English even in churches which do not aim to be “international”. The situation is akin to the role that Latin played in the pre-Vatican II Catholic church or that Arabic plays in the non-Arabic Muslim world. It is the language which opens up a world of Islamic texts and songs, enables correct interpretation of these media, enables “pilgrimage” to centers for spiritual development and training, and constitutes a great deal of the visual and soundscape of the religious services.

This phenomena needs to be analyzed in more detail, whether it is simply reflective of the increasing English proficiency in Eastern Europe, or whether, as a new centre for English, evangelical Christianity becomes a contributing force in a switch toward English, and a valuation of English repertoires. At very least, this change complicates the notion of “heart language” described in Section 4.3.3, and many of the motives for and assumptions about missionary language learning. The rise and local appropriation of global languages, remaking them into codes which are just as “locally owned” as the traditional varieties with more restricted circulation (such as English in Tonga (Besnier 2013) or Spanish on RapaNui (Makihara 2013)). It is becoming easier for at least some young Slovenes to understand the Bible in contemporary English than in the
Slovene translation. In such a situation, if English is both thought of as “a local language” and the preferred language for spiritual activity, serious challenges are posed for the schema of “heart language” illustrated in Figure 4.2. Is this young Slovene’s switch to English caused by the fact that Western Christian workers do not learn the host language well, and thus plant churches that are unavoidably Anglicized? Or is the switch driven by the desires and goals of host national evangelicals themselves? Regardless, if churches accommodate increasingly for English-speaking populations, local congregations no longer serve as an environment which supports field workers’ language acquisition attempts, and may communicate between the lines, that “English is enough” and that learning the host language is not so necessary after all.

10.5 A BIGGER PICTURE

Sitting in a cafe on the banks of the Ljubljanica river, pondering her own sense of herself as a Slovene learner, Kristin revealed an honest and telling anecdote from her own developing second language learnerhood. When she had first been in Slovenia as a Sprinter, she admitted that she projected the foreignness of the Slovene language onto the Christian God. She confessed that at first, she felt like English was God’s native language, his heart language, and that the other minor languages of the world were second languages to God, languages that he understood, but not really the language God communicated in. It was a revelation to her, as she met Slovene faith communities, that her thinking was wrong. English wasn’t God’s “first language;” He loves communicating in Slovene, and in all the languages of the world. He spoke to Slovenes in Slovene. As Seerveld notes, “no language is foreign to God”. This underscored to her the moral imperatives for learning Slovene, the “heart language” of her adopted host country. Her
success or failure in the eyes of her financial supporters and her God depended on her ultimate attainment of the language. She struggled to find ways to learn Slovene in the United States while awaiting her arrival, she struggled to select among the many options for pursuing Slovene fluency, and she struggled to deal with the rowdy classmates, the declension paradigms, the placement testing, the homework assignments of the Slovene language school she eventually chose. Yet the imperative to learn the “heart language” of the people drove her to continue taking risks and interacting in limited Slovene with Slovenes who possessed a much wider and more fluent English repertoire.

Her passion however contrasted with the perspectives of two Eastern Europeans. Jennifer, a longer term field worker in Slovenia, related that to one host national involved with Love the World, he actually preferred to read the Bible in English. The Slovene translation of the Bible felt outdated, with an archaic style far removed from the language of his heart; when reading in Slovene he often had to use a dictionary, whereas when he read it in English, the words were simple and spoke straight to his heart. One Lithuanian student, who I befriended when I lived there, reported something similar to me. He had started to believe in the Christian God through contact with American evangelicals. Though he was a proud Lithuanian, he expressed to me that he always spoke to God in English. In his mind English was the language of spirituality, as all the songs he had heard and books he had read about God were in English. He had come to the opposite conclusion of Kristin, after interacting with believers from another culture within the assemblage of evangelicalism. For him, English was indeed God’s first language.

The rise of the sociolinguistics of globalization paradigm has brought about talk of “the death of languages”, not as in language endangerment, but as in the end of the
concept of discrete and bounded codes. Its distributed model, which deals with repertoires and translinguaging and apprentices into behaviors rather than acquisition of systems of signs works well with the sociocultural methodologies described in this dissertation. Yet this paradigm is at odds with peoples’ reified views of language, and academic forms of studenthood. These ideologies of language are transmitted equally in the four-skills and communicative language experiences of Americans in their high schools and colleges, as well as in the grammar-translation, contrastive analysis, and drill- and paradigm-focused language experiences of Eastern Europeans. While sociolinguistics is doing “the death of language”, SLA theory continues to be interested in interlanguages and target languages, in mental grammars, aptitudes, frequencies, and processing. Although language learning is social, it is done against the backdrop of the “whole language” ideal, the ideal of becoming “fluent” in a “national” language. The missions enterprise seems to be the perfect field for post-modern, translinguaging approaches, wherein boundary crossers apprentice themselves to the mixed and mixing language repertoires of their hosts. And yet, at least for Americans in the European context, academic ideologies of language promote projects of nationalism, fluency in target language grammar, and a “people group” missiology.

In my conversations within the evangelical assemblage, the imperative to learn languages, to achieve fluency, the overarching organizer of learnerhood seems to be related to “heart language” ideology. Success or failure depends in many ways on host language acquisition, in speaking a message to the heart. Indeed, Mary signs all her communications “until all can hear in their own language”. Several verses from the Bible itself use the phrase “every nation and tribe and tongue and people” depicting humanity
as carved into groups by “tongue”, which is equated with their nation and people. This seems to echo Calvin Seerveld’s interpretation of the Babel story that “it was the uniformity of speech, a kind of monotonic cant utilized by the human race to stick together, that angered God” (2001:7). In the globalized age of diaspora and migration, hybridity, mixed ethnicity, migration, translanguageing, and polycentricity, human language is certainly not “monotonic” than ever, and yet does not neatly fit a categorization into “tongues”.

How will such Christian organizations adapt to globalization, if they retain the ideology of bounded distinct languages and peoples? Will their policies be markedly different from those of non-faith-based NGOs, who may more freely adopt perspectives from the sociolinguistics and sociology of globalization? What effect will this very large force of motivated learners, who bring their English repertoires into field sites loaded with layered indexical meanings of English, have on the linguistic ecologies of their host communities? Will the moral imperative of language learning change as English forms continue to proliferate, and modernist nationalist projects are dislodged? The size of the Christian missions and development enterprise is likely to continue growing in the coming decades, itself becoming more diverse, and less rooted in Western countries like the United States. It will be fascinating to continue to observe such organizations, seeing how language acquisition methodologies and their accompanying learnerhoods evolve in response to the changing social organization of globalization.
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**APPENDIX A: PARTICIPANT POOL OF AMERICAN FIELD WORKERS**

Participant pool of American field workers who I interviewed. **Bolded** participants I had the chance to interview at StepOut. *Italicized* participants I was able to interview in the field. Participants who are marked with an asterisk ‘Name*’ I interviewed at StepOut only, and due to attrition or security reasons, never did a follow-up interview or field visit with.

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APPENDIX B: “CUTE” PRINCIPLES OF THE GPA

How to Learn a Language for Sure! (Thomson 2004, original formatting)

1. COMMUNING

**Basic Point:** Language primarily exists in RELATIONSHIPS between PEOPLE.

**Rule to Follow:** Acquire the language primarily in Supercharged Participation Activities – The activities of LL called: SPAs.

Share LIFE and GROW;

Share LIFE through RELATIONSHIPS;

Share all aspects of YOUR LIFE.

2. UNDERSTANDING

**Basic Point:** Understanding speech involves a complex set of skills that only develop as YOU USE IT.

**Rule to Follow:** Listen to LARGE AMOUNTS OF LANGUAGE THAT YOU CAN UNDERSTAND! (Note: Research has shown that in order to learn more language, you MUST understand 80% of what’s being said. Less than that, you are so focused on understanding, that you are unable to learn new language.)

Related to ASPECTS of daily LIFE, EVENTS and RELATIONSHIPS.

3. TALKING

**Basic Point:** Putting thoughts into words involves a complex set of skills that develop only as YOU SPEAK. (Note: As with young children, you must listen, listen, listen before you speak.)

**Rule to follow:** Engage in large amounts of EXTEMPORANEOUS INTERACTION.

Related to ASPECTS of daily LIFE, EVENTS, and RELATIONSHIPS.

Your own THOUGHTS expressed in your own WORDS.

4. EVOLVING

**Basic Point:** As your ability changes, the ways you can learn and relate to people CHANGES.

**Rule to follow:** Adapt your learning activities and social life to your CURRENT ABILITY LEVEL. (Keeping in mind the 80% rule!)

Keep talking “badly” until you can finally talk well!

Steadily and systematically (whether quickly or slowly) conquer more and more of the world. Do not limit your vision!

5. REDEEMING

**Basic Point:** From the very beginning of your language learning process, you are a redemptive influence in your “Domain of Redemptive Activity – DRA – the place you are.

**Rule to follow:** Allow God to unfold you as a redemptive presence in your current community.
APPENDIX C: NOTES ON THE STRUCTURE AND DISSEMINATION OF THE GPA MATERIALS

The Growing Participator Approach is not a published document, but rather a loose collection of articles, mostly written by Greg Thomson. The articles describe philosophies of language acquisition, troubleshooting guides on practical applications, overviews of the method, detailed descriptions of each phase, detailed descriptions of each construct, and sample lessons or materials. These articles circulate individually in various iterations, as well as collected in various constellations at various sites on the internet; the “canon” of GPA materials seems undefined. In addition to these text articles there are various diagrams, files such as wordless picture books, and other kinds of materials which can be used by language learners.

All this makes the GPA difficult to site. Materials are collected and distributed freely by language learners in the assemblage of missionary language learning. In the following table I present several locations where I encountered the GPA materials:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>My sources for accessing GPA materials</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Collection as of 2010: A physical notebook assembled by Mary and distributed to Love the World workers at StepOut</td>
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<tr>
<td>Collection as of 2011: A flash drive containing GPA files distributed by worker for Arab World Ministries</td>
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<tr>
<td>Early versions, dating from the early 1990’s can be found at: <a href="http://www.languageimpact.com/articles/articles.htm">www.languageimpact.com/articles/articles.htm</a></td>
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<td>Files from 2012, as well as many other files about sociocultural field based language learning are accessible at: growingparticipatorapproach.wordpress.com</td>
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<td>Versions from around 2007 can be accessed at: <a href="http://www.mcelroys.us/thestaffroom/filecabinet/language/">http://www.mcelroys.us/thestaffroom/filecabinet/language/</a></td>
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APPENDIX D: NODES USED TO CODE THE DATA IN NVIVO, THEMES IN LEARNERHOOD

- Academics
- Accent
- Aptitude
  - Appealing to aptitude
  - Downplaying aptitude
- Assessment-Accountability
  - Changing assessment
  - Less assessment
  - More assessment
- Church’s role in language learning
- Economic Immigrants- comparisons
- English Use
  - Expats using English
  - Host nationals using English
  - Field workers using English
- Expectations
- Follow up on
- Goals
- GPA
  - Language helper
  - Iceberg
- Heart language
- Host language
  - Metalinguistic commentary
  - Host nationals using it
  - Field workers using it
  - What’s at stake in learning it
  - When to use it
- How to learn
  - Language classes
  - Host nationals’ language learning ideologies
  - Media usage
  - Other expats’ experiences
  - Personal past experiences
- Immersion
- LAMP
- Landscaping (linguistic as input)
- Language Acquisition Theories
  - Grammar-translation theory
  - Input Processing theory
  - Negotiation-interaction theory
  - Socialization theory
  - Sociocultural theory
- Language barrier
- Language coaching
- Language ideology
- Learner autonomy
- Learning style-motivation
- Linguistics in language learning
- Longevity
- Love the World
  - Organization’s character
  - National offices
  - Regional offices
- Ministry
- Missionary attitudes
  - on competence
  - on the host culture
- Multilingualism
- My positioning
- PILAT
- Plateau
- Pre-field language learning
- Reverse Conversation
- Rosetta Stone
- Russian
- Slang
- Sprinters
  - Language learning motivation
  - Positive aspects of Sprinters
  - Sprinters causing issues
- StepOut
- Negative aspects
- Positive aspects
- Summer projects
- Supporters
- Team roles and language learning
  - Administrative roles
  - Husband-wife interaction
  - Language learning affecting team dynamics
  - Motherhood
- Team leading
- Third language speaker (neither English nor host language)
- Time as unit of language learning
  - Hours
  - Years
- Using a translator
- Visas
- Vocabulary acquisition
APPENDIX E: SAMPLE PROGRESSION OF PILAT LESSON

OVERALL GUIDE SHEET FOR LANGUAGE ACQUISITION PROJECTS #1-#20
COMPREHENSION PROJECTS THAT INCORPORATE COMMANDS
(Gradin, 2010, C-10, formatting original)

Prepare the props (draw the sketches or get the items) ahead of time.

**Word Identification**: Lay the items (or sketches) on the table. (1a) **You** (the learner) touch each item. (1b) **Your Helper tells** you the word. (2a) **Your Helper** says the names of the items. (2b) **You touch** them. Do not mimic!

**Step 1. Do & Listen**: First, get the common word for **you**. (Some languages have many words for you.) Ask your helper, “If you are talking to me, what word do you use for you?” Then, (1) **You** (the learner) **Do** the actions. (2) **Your Helper tells** you what you did, using you-in-past-tense* (e.g., ‘You picked up the book’). **Past tense** is incorporated here because it reflects the actual reality of the situation; the statement describes completed [past] action. (Note: Do the actions repeatedly and randomly. Listen and associate your action with the words that describe it.) Do not mimic!

**Step 2. Listen & Do**: (1) **Your Helper tells** you to do one of these things (command-form; e.g., ‘Pick up the book’). (2) **You Do** the action to demonstrate comprehension. Again, do not mimic yet. Do not be forced into speaking too soon! (Note: The command form will be different but still comprehensible.) (Important: Find out if the pronoun **you** is normally used when giving a command. For example, in English we just say, ‘Pick up the book’ rather than ‘You pick up the book.’)

Encourage your helper to speak at normal/natural speed. Your brain can handle it because you do not have to mimic it. You demonstrate comprehension by doing the activity.

**Step 3. Listen & Say ‘True/False’**: First, ask your helper how to say yes/no (or true/false, right/wrong). Then give the items/sketches to your helper. (1) **Your Helper does** one of the actions and **makes a true or false** I (past tense) statement (e.g., ‘I picked up the book’). (2) **You Listen & Say, ‘True’ /’False’** (or yes/no, right/wrong).

**SUGGESTION** -- At the very beginning, language learning should be almost totally comprehension-focused, allowing your comprehension ability to progress faster than your speaking ability (See C-4, #1-3). So, unless you sense that you are ready to mimic and produce, feel free to skip Steps 4-9, go directly to Step 10 and get written and recorded what you’ve practiced. Then go on to the next Progression in the LAP. You can do several LAPS this way (Steps 0-3, 10). Then, when you are ready, include Steps 4-9.
Step 0 Again. Go back and do all of just Step 0 again, but this time mimic the words. This gives you a chance to say just the words before you mimic the whole command in Step 4.

Step 4. Listen & Mimic & Do: (1) Your Helper tells you to do one of these things (as in Step 2). (2) You now Mimic while Doing the action. (Note: Encourage your Helper to mix it up and give you random commands, so that you cannot predict the next one.)

Step 5. Listen, Mimic & Do plus Questions: First, ask your helper to write down question words that can be used in this activity. Then, (1) Your Helper tells you to do one of these things (as in Step 2). (2) You Mimic & Do it. (3) Then your Helper asks you 2-3 Questions related to the just -completed command. (4) You indicate and state the shortest answer possible**. (5) Your Helper indicates and states the shortest possible answer.

Step 6. Tell & Observe: Give the items/sketches to your helper. (1) You attempt to Tell (i.e., command) your helper to do the actions. Then You Observe whether or not your helper understands. (2) Your Helper restates the command and then does it. (3) You mimic. (Notes: (1) Do not do the action as you give the command. (2) Ask if a learner can command a teacher in the same way a teacher commands a learner.)

Step 7. Do & Listen & Mimic: (1) You Do the actions (as in Step 1) and (2) Listen to your Helper make the proper you-with-past-tense* statement. (3) You Mimic. (This readies you for Step 8)

Step 8. Observe & Tell: Give the items/sketches to your helper. (1) You Observe your Helper do the actions. (2) You attempt to Tell your helper what he/she did, using you (in past tense)*. (3) Your Helper restates. (4) You mimic. (Notes: (1) What is the proper ‘you’ pronoun the learner should use when addressing a teacher? (2) Also, if desirable, have your helper ask questions again (like in Step 5) after you have described what he/she did.

Step 9. Do & Tell: (1) You Do an action and attempt to (2) Tell your helper what you did using I-past. (3) Your Helper restates. (4) You mimic.

Step 10. Written & Recorded: (1) Ask your Helper to Write a few examples of Step 1 (you-past), Step 2 (command), Step 3 (I-past), Step 5 (questions). (2) Record these. First, you record the source of these examples; e.g., “LAP 3, Progression One examples.” Then your helper records the written examples. (3) Then you say, “More random examples”, and your helper records up to one minute more of random examples from all four (Steps 1 ,2,3,5)***. This will provide helpful practice later. (Important: You need to take from the session both something to look at and something to listen to for further practice.)

Notes: *Steps 1, 7,8: If there are two or more learners in the group, it might be helpful to alternate: Use you (in past tense) during Progression One and he/she (past tense) during Progression Two (your helper telling the other learners in the group what the learner-in-charge did). This allows learners to hear two different pronouns (and verb endings).

**Step 5: Comprehension is the major focus and should be allowed to progress faster than speaking. So do not be forced into speaking until you are ready. If you must talk, give the
shortest answer possible, 1 or 2 words. Paying attention to the question (particularly the question word and word order) is more important than verbalizing the answer at this stage.

***Step 10: If your helper finds it difficult to do this extemporaneously, then you quickly put random props together and have your helper say what’s there.