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FREMDSPRACHEN-FORSCHUNG

Sarah Boye

**Intercultural
Communicative Competence
and Short Stays Abroad:
Perceptions of Development**

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zur Fremdsprachen-Forschung

*herausgegeben von
Friederike Klippel*

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In loving memory of my maternal grandparents

BETTY AND GEOFFREY ROBERTS

They instilled in all their offspring a belief in the power of education, a passion for teaching and a love of language.

Preface

“How you look at it is pretty much how you’ll see it” (Rasheed Ogunlaru). This gets to the heart of my grapple not just with intercultural experiences but also the essence of scientific enquiry. Accepting the impossibility of an objective appraisal of human behaviour determined not just the understanding of assessment in intercultural education which is a crucial theme, but also the very nature of the endeavour presented here.

This doctoral thesis was presented for award at the Ludwig-Maximilian’s University in Munich in the spring of 2015. It is the result of seven years of work, introspection and extrospection, and coincides with my first seven years of motherhood so has therefore often being referred to as my third, and perhaps most difficult, labour! I am grateful that I had the opportunity to complete this thesis, and there are many people who must be thanked for their roles in helping and supporting me on this journey.

My debt of gratitude is great to so many people, too many to name here. Singled out are: Ann-Cathrin Deters-Philipp for her help with the abstract and many, many other things. Emma Jones, who I thank especially for her eagle eyes with the proof reading and encouragement when it all seemed a bit much. I thank Gill Woodman for being there when I needed to sound out ideas and for letting me in on the ICP. To my husband Dirk Boye I owe so many thanks: his love, support and belief kept me going. I am also indebted to Margit Boye for looking after the children day after day (and evening after evening) in the spring of 2015.

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Munich, May 2016

Sarah Boye

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1 Introduction

Study abroad challenges educators and researchers to discover new ways to explain and measure the process of change that is the essence of education. (Kauffman et al., 1992: 144)

As a carefree undergraduate at the University of Glasgow I had a carefree holiday in Turkey with a group of Australians who were far better travelled and therefore, I assumed, more worldly than I was. I remember one of them recounting a phrase she had heard time and time again while shopping at markets in Asia: “Same same but different”. “Do you like this bag or this one? Same same but different”, “Is it a real Rolex watch?” “No no, same same but different”, “Don’t like the sunglasses? Have a look at baseball caps, same same but different”. It became a running holiday joke for us: we ordered different cocktails from a menu but they looked similar, “same same but different”! I had brought an Iain Banks novel along as a holiday read, she an Iain M. Banks,¹ “same same but different”! The opportunities were plentiful and we rarely missed one.

Over the years the phrase stayed with me and as I became more conscious, as a language learner and teacher, teacher trainer and a mother, of the role of cognition in learning, I became more and more aware of how fundamental this particular cognitive process is. Echoing Piaget, I saw that making distinctions between what is the same as something else and what is dissimilar enough to be considered different, when and where it is necessary to draw a line between sameness and difference and what purposes it serves are central to social, moral and pedagogical development, not just among children, but at all stages in life. This cognitive process also forms the basis of an individual’s reactions to other beings, and the critical faculties at the heart of abstract thought. It can also go towards accounting for variation in opinions about society, differing values and political allegiance for example.

Living for short stints in other countries also led me to consider how so much of the experience of living abroad can be described in terms of sameness and difference. There’s the obvious, of course, that can be articulated by anyone who visits a different place for any length of time, but there are more complex and nuanced considerations that are particularly relevant for language learners visiting countries where the foreign language they are learning is spoken. First, when I am away from ‘home’, I still know I am me, but the external signifiers which are part of how I define myself are different, so are the people I interact with and the things I say. Am I essentially the same, am I thinking the same things, or have the differing external factors changed me and the way I think? Secondly, I’m still a language learner, that hasn’t changed, but the way I learn the language doesn’t feel like the kind of learning I did with Madame Robbins every

1 Iain Banks and Iain M. Banks are the same author, but he published his science-fiction work under Iain M. Banks.

Tuesday and Thursday after Geography. It's experiential, varied, autonomous learning and sometimes even necessary for my very survival. It can be exhilarating and exhausting. It has never felt like this before. Thirdly, the language itself: it's the same language but only rarely does it sound or feel the same. It's different. Everything I thought I knew is not what I thought. Think again. Think quickly. Finally, I go back to what I thought was 'home', it is the same flat in the same town, the same family and friends but it's different. Have they changed or have I? Things are just not the same anymore.

No wonder then, that an eight week stay abroad for students of English at the Ludwig-Maximilians University in Munich (LMU) where I now teach kindled my research interest and these ponderings have found an intellectual expression in the doctoral thesis that follows. The leitmotif of *same same but different* is everywhere one looks for it. Language and culture: same same? Or same same but different? Or just different? Intercultural competence and transcultural competence: same same...right? Ultimately the study takes the form of deconstructing the institutional aim of the short stay abroad at the LMU, which is that participants develop *intercultural communicative competence* and uncovering, from an emic perspective, what the participants understand by this competence, and whether they perceive development in any elements of it. Emic is used here as opposed to etic, to distinguish between looking at the phenomenon in question from the perspective of those experiencing it (emic) or as an outsider observing it (etic) after von Wright (1971) in Byram (2011: 25).

1.1 Background and context

The background and context for the study that follows mainly concerns an explanation of the circumstances in which the short stay abroad at the LMU, called the Intercultural Project (ICP) was introduced and the wider context of studying languages at university in Germany at the present time.

At many German universities, students of modern foreign languages (MFL) are not required to spend time abroad. Although the teaching assistant programme and now the Erasmus scheme and other opportunities to travel abroad are popular, students can, if they wish, graduate with a degree in one or more foreign language(s) without ever having left their university town. This might come as a surprise from a British perspective where the 'year abroad' is a fixed feature of MFL degrees.² The difference between these traditions does not need to be examined too closely here, what is relevant is the current climate in German higher education with regard to student mobility; because while internationalisation through student mobility is being actively encouraged at an institutional, national and supranational level (Dehmel, Li & Sloane, 2011: 12), there is no particular drive to make time abroad a requirement for students of modern foreign languages.

2 As far back as the fourteenth century Chaucer's Prioress is gently mocked in the *General Prologue to the Canterbury Tales* for speaking the French of 'Stratford-atte-Bow' as the French of Paris 'was to hir unknowe'.

The tradition of not requiring time abroad for students can be seen to have various roots. First, before the standardisation to B.A./ M.A. degrees, the old German degree system allowed students a large amount of autonomy in how they conducted their studies. Rather than a degree course being for a fixed number of years, registration for a certain number of semesters was required before students could complete a degree. Students had to complete certain courses and could choose how many courses to attend each semester for themselves. It might have been technically possible to complete all the courses necessary to register for final exams within six or seven semesters although a student would still have to be registered for eight semesters before the final exams could be taken. Taking a semester off to do an internship or work or study overseas was permitted at any time during the studies.³ Secondly, requiring students of MFL degrees to go abroad seemed unnecessary under this system and also potentially unfair. Why should students of one university subject be made to incur the extra costs of living abroad and not others? Finally, using the British context again for comparison, British students of MFL represent a significantly smaller proportion of university students than MFL students in Germany. Students in the UK choose an MFL degree knowing that it requires a year abroad and those who don't feel able to commit to that can choose another subject. For reasons that will not be dwelled upon here, the demand for MFL graduates in the UK is not as great as in Germany. In Germany a large number of students who have English as a major subject are studying for a teaching degree which will usually lead to employment as a teacher in a German state school.⁴ If students were discouraged by a requirement to go abroad they may choose other subjects to study. As English is a core subject in German schools, and since 2005 must be taught from the third year of primary school onwards in all federal states, English must remain a popular choice for undergraduates studying to become teachers and the course of study must remain comparable to other school subjects.

Against this backdrop there is the growing appetite among EFL teaching professionals and university educators for students of English to be required to go abroad. Ehrenreich's study (2004) found that the benefits of those who did partake in the teaching assistant programme were too great to ignore. Before then, in 2001, the implementation of the short stay abroad for all students of English at the LMU had already begun. Rather than a year abroad, this is an eight week stay abroad called the "Intercultural Project", which is undertaken in between teaching semesters. Unlike the teaching assistant or Erasmus programmes, students on this shorter programme are not affiliated with a school or university during their stay abroad. Instead, through pre-departure and post-trip workshops they are encouraged to see their time abroad as ethnography (Roberts et al., 2001) and a chance to develop their intercultural as well as language skills.⁵ What the English department at the LMU have done, which other departments at other Ger-

3 Although German universities now operate according to the B.A./ M.A. system a lot of this flexibility remains.

4 These are known as *Lehramt* degrees and have state exams at the end as teachers are awarded civil servant status in some German states.

5 The Intercultural Project is described in detail in chapter 3.1.1.

man universities have so far not done, is to make the Intercultural Project a compulsory language course, which students are required to complete before they can finish their studies. The aims of the project are not identified in terms of linguistic development alone, rather the participants are expected to develop their intercultural communicative competence and learn about themselves.

By 2009 the ICP had been running for eight years but had yet to be the focus of any large scale empirical research;⁶ so the background and context of the following study actually getting underway can be seen in terms of a research proposal to scrutinise the workings of the ICP being welcomed by those responsible for establishing the project and those running it. Not only was there a consensus that as a unique kind of stay abroad programme in the German higher education MFL context it was important to subject it to empirical scrutiny, there was also a genuine curiosity to find out more about what effect the ICP was having on the student participants.

In terms of the wider context in which this study relating to student internationalisation is situated, one might be drawn into a consideration of the impact of globalisation. Although there is certainly a change in how computer and telecommunications technology affect the ways in which intercultural interaction can take place, O'Dowd (2009) talks of online intercultural exchange (OIE) as an important emerging field in ICC and foreign language education, this study does not focus on digital exchange, neither does it focus on telecommunicative gadgetry such as smart phone use in students who go abroad. So although the global changes relating to how people communicate with each other, access information, travel, live and work are not to be denied, these changes actually have a negotiable impact on the focus of this study, which is face to face encounters in a foreign language.

1.2 Relevant literature and previous research on student mobility

Student mobility is on the rise. The number of university students in European countries of all disciplines who express an interest in going abroad during their studies rose by 92 per cent between 2011 and 2012 and continues to rise, according the study portal's website.⁷ The teaching assistant exchange programme is now 110 years old (Crawshaw, 2006) and the Erasmus programme 30 years old. Students who go on the Erasmus programme come from all faculties and subjects whereas the teaching assistant programme is usually the reserve of modern foreign language students. Nowadays many degrees such as those in international relations and business management have a stay abroad built into the programme (see Dehmel et al., 2011).

6 Although in 2008, Woodman (an ICP course tutor) published a book chapter with some reflections of the ICP.

7 <http://www.studyportals.eu/media/press-releases/391/press-release-study-abroad-embraced-by-eu-students-to-flee-recession-test.html> (date accessed: 27.07.2014).

Looking at figures for student mobility in Germany, Unesco provide a very good interactive tool⁸ which shows that, according to data from 2014, German students abroad make up 3.4% of all mobile students, with 117 576 students abroad. These figures can be compared to other European countries, for example the UK figure of percentage of mobile students is 0.8%, a total of 27 968 students abroad and the figure for French students abroad is 1.8% of all mobile students, 62 416 in total. In Spain the figure is nearly as low as the UK with only 30 135 students abroad, 0.9% of all mobile students. After China, India and South Korea, Germany has the fourth highest number of mobile students overseas. On the other hand, in 2014, the UK hosted 12.2% of all mobile students, France hosted 7.7%, Germany 5.9% and Spain 1.6%. Germany is the 5th biggest country of destination for internationally mobile students after the USA, the UK, France and Australia. The website defines internationally mobile students as those who have crossed a national border to study *or* who are enrolled on a distance learning programme but unfortunately does not separate those data, so it is unknown how many of the mobile students mentioned above are enrolled on distance learning programmes and how many are studying abroad for a semester or more. Mobile students are not permanent residents of the country where this period of study takes place. Internationally mobile students defined here are a sub-category of foreign students, who by definition have permanent residency in the country where they study, normally for a complete course of study. Of internationally mobile students the website says:

The rise in internationally mobile students reflects growing university enrolment around the world. In 2012, at least 4 million students went abroad to study, up from 2 million in 2000, representing 1.8% of all tertiary enrolments or 2 in 100 students globally.
(<http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-student-flow-viz.aspx>)

The website does not provide information on the subjects which students study so there is no definitive account from this source of how many of these internationally mobile students are students of modern foreign languages.

1.2.1 Research into student mobility and intercultural competence

There is an accompanying growing body of research on the impact of student mobility or the ‘stay abroad’ in higher education in general and, for the purpose of this study, the field of foreign language education in particular. For a European and Asian perspective: Selltiz, Hopson & Cook, 1956; Coleman & Parker, 2001 (cited in O’Reilly, 2014); Ehrenreich, 2004; and numerous contributions in the volume edited by Byram and Feng, 2006; for a US perspective: Cooper, Beare & Thorman, 1990; Zeichner and Melnick, 1996; Suarez, 2002. According to Dehmel et al. in 2011, research has shown that “Higher education institutions miss the opportunity to use the study abroad programmes for the development of their students’ intercultural competence. One of the reasons for

8 <http://www.uis.unesco.org/Education/Pages/international-student-flow-viz.aspx> (date accessed: 29.03.2015).

this is the lack of adequate systematic and holistic pedagogical designs at higher education level” (Dehmel et al., 2011: 28) (for a similar perspective see also Moon, 2004). This perceived missed opportunity has led to a focus on designing courses, resources and multimedia support for students participating in a stay abroad and to research into their efficacy. Such efforts can be seen in the European context with the IEREST (Intercultural Education Resources for Erasmus Students and their Teachers) project, funded by the European Commission, which aims to produce materials for pre- and post-, incoming and outgoing Erasmus courses which will be open-access for all course tutors and designers at higher education institutions and ready in time for the Erasmus programme’s 30th birthday in 2015. Despite all this activity and the burgeoning figures of students on the move, the IEREST website⁹ states that student mobility is still the exception and not the rule and the number of mobile students in many European countries is below the projected figure of ten per cent (Murphy-Lejeune, 2008: 12). Therefore research is often undertaken from the perspective that student mobility needs to be promoted further, not just among foreign language students but among all higher education students (Ehrenreich, 2004).

Dehmel et al. (2011) provide a summary of research into intercultural competence and the stay abroad, specifying the focus of the research undertaken so far. They shorten study-abroad programme to SAP although they state “The variety of student mobility programs ranges from academic stays to language courses, internships and study trips to higher education institutions (excursions, summer courses, research stays etc.)” (Dehmel et al., 2011: 12). In the current project, the term ‘*stay* abroad’ rather than ‘*study* abroad’ is preferred, and the eight to ten week intercultural project which the participants in this research project go on is described as a ‘short stay abroad’. According to the DAAD (German academic exchange service), short-term can mean anything between one week and four months (i.e. one semester) and long-term for stays that exceed six months (Dehmel et al., 2011: 34).

Table one is based on Dehmel et al. with additions by the current author (in bold). It is not a synthesis of all research into the stay abroad, it only includes research related to the stay abroad for higher/ further education students and mainly issues relating to ICC. Studies which only focus on the language learning impact or linguistic features of the stay abroad (e.g. Freed, 1995; Coleman, 1996, 1997, 2002; Iwasaki, 2013, Fernandez, 2013) or school exchanges (e.g. Thomas, 1988; Zeutschel, 2004; Ertelt-Vieth, 2005; Gisevius, 2008; Tan & Kinginger, 2013) are not included.

Research foci	Scholars and studies
<i>Impact of stay abroad on...</i>	
...personal development/ growth, self-efficacy	Gmelch, 1997; Hadis, 2005; Milstein, 2005; Black & Duhon, 2006
...social-emotional stability, socio-psychological adaptation	Tuleja, 2008; Leong, 2007; Furnham, 2004; Ayano, 2006; Abarbanel, 2009
...increased intercultural awareness,	Williams, 2005; Ryan, 2009; Hayashi, 2000;

9 <http://www.ierest-project.eu/the-project> (date accessed: 13.07.2014).

self-awareness, intercultural identity, language use and identity	Wolcott, 2013; Brown, 2013
...overall development of intercultural sensitivity – IDI (Intercultural Development Inventory)	Anderson et al., 2006; Jackson, 2008; Pedersen, 2010; Engle & Engle, 2004
...higher level of intercultural competence (openness/ ethnorelativism, international concern, interpersonal communication skills, self-efficacy) / intercultural proficiency (global mindedness, intercultural communication, openness to diversity, intercultural sensitivity), manifestations of curiosity, ability to reflect, intercultural mediation	Yashima, 2010; Clarke III et al., 2009; Woodman, 2008; Houghton, 2014; Lumkes et al., 2012; O'Reilly, 2014; Alred & Byram, 2002.
...student motivation in participating in more international activities (global mindedness), long term impact	Gray et al., 2002; Kisantas, 2004; Hadis, 2005; Paige et al., 2009
...attitudes (perceptions) towards international understanding, interest in cultural differences, intercultural friendship	Baty & Dold, 1977; Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Hadis, 2005; Coleman, 1998; Gareis, 2000; de Federico de la Rúa, 2008
...student mobility for international jobs/ assignments.	Wiers-Jenssen 2008
...cross-cultural skills, adjustment	Kisantas 2004, Pearson-Evans 2000
<i>Other foci</i>	
Assessment of effectiveness of stays abroad, students' perspectives of outcomes, effect of pre-departure preparation on intercultural development	Lewis & Niesenbaum 2005, Pederson 2010, Deardorff 2006, Byram 1992, Tarp 2006, Shaheen 2004
Predictors on participation in stays abroad	Goldstein & Kim 2006, Marcotte et al. 2007
The role that students' motivation and goals for a stay abroad play in intercultural adaptation	Chirkov et al. 2007, Chirkov et al. 2008, Yang et al. 2011
The role of intercultural learning through stays abroad for (pre-service) teachers	Ehrenreich 2004, Pence & Macgillivray 2008, Walter et al. 2009, Smolcic 2011 & 2013, Wang 2014
How length of stay abroad affects cross-cultural adaptation	Dwyer 2004, Medina-López-Portillo 2004, Hamad & Lee 2013

Table 1: Synthesis of research into stay abroad and ICC (adapted from Dehmel et al. (2011: 15) and extended by the present author)

Although the studies overwhelmingly conclude that a stay abroad for any length of time has an overall positive impact (Bennett, 2009: 2), there has also been some research which has questioned this common belief (see for e.g. Wilkinson, 1998 and Coleman, 1997).

1.2.2 Short stays abroad and FLE: why this study is necessary

Despite the growing research area detailed in the table above, research into the experiences of students of modern foreign languages and foreign language education (FLE) at German universities who participate in a stay abroad is scant. What research there is focuses on long-term stays such as those undertaken as Erasmus or teaching assistant students and has been chiefly concerned with the development of language skills (see Ehrenreich, 2004: 12–23 for a summary).¹⁰ But as Ehrenreich points out, in the German context there are several seeming inconsistencies (2006: 186): although the need for future language teachers to spend time abroad is emphatically supported by professionals in the field, a stay abroad is rarely a compulsory requirement at universities. Technically, a teacher of one or more foreign language(s) can complete their teaching degree and be fully qualified to teach those languages without having ever spent a single day outside Germany.¹¹ So the focus on language students at a German university for whom a short stay abroad has now become a requirement of their degree is certainly a new framing for such a study.

Parallel developments have been documented in some Asian countries, where higher education institutes have also responded to the need for language students to have a formal opportunity to spend time in parts of the world where that language is spoken (Jackson, 2006: 134). Universities in some Asian countries now offer sponsorship for students to go on short-term stay abroad programmes, ranging in length of between four to ten weeks. Jackson (2006: 134) contends that research foci in this area have been on longer (six to twelve month) stay abroad programmes and not on the more recent short stay programmes. She also states that the research has been more concerned with language acquisition of the participants and not their lived experiences. Jackson (2006) details her own study which looked at students from a Hong Kong university who spent five weeks in England as part of a B.A. English degree programme. There is also a growing body of research in the US where short-term study abroad programmes have become increasingly popular at higher education institutions (Kartoshkina, Chieffo & Kang, 2013). The stay/ study abroad is an important distinction to make here though, because as the research on student mobility continues to burgeon such distinctions become more necessary in order to situate one's own research in the field. For instance while the Erasmus scheme is generally regarded as a *study* abroad programme, in which mobile students must still accrue ECTS points while away which go towards their course of study,¹² the language teacher assistant programme is better regarded as a stay abroad as participants do not study at a host university or receive ECTS points.¹³ The

10 Two semesters for teaching assistants and one or two semesters for Erasmus students.

11 Unfortunately no data has been gathered to indicate how often this occurs, or what impact it has on teaching.

12 Although students can qualify for an Erasmus grant without having to study at a host university.

13 Although some home universities might award credit for participation in the teaching assistant programme (the LMU do this for example), participants do not *study* abroad or receive ECTS points from a host university.

ICP which is the focus of the research for this study is also a stay (not a study) abroad and, as discussed above, can be further distinguished as a *short* stay abroad. In the US research, programmes which are described as short-term are consistently described as *study* abroad (e.g. Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen & Hubbard, 2006; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Gullekson, Tucker & Coombs, 2011; Schwieter & Kunert, 2012). For various reasons the programmes offered by US institutions do not usually require participants to work or volunteer during their time away and often operate on an “island” basis (Wolcott, 2013) whereby courses at the host universities are offered in English and adhere to the requirements of the home universities.

It becomes clearer that the ICP which is the focus of this study is distinct from most of the other short stays abroad in some important ways. The students are required to plan their trip, including destination and the work they must engage in, completely independently. *Studying* abroad is not permitted, rather participants have to engage in some kind of gainful or voluntary employment. Furthermore, participation is not optional, for students of English it is a compulsory part of their degree. Its closest cousin, in the family of student stay abroad types, is perhaps the ‘year abroad’ typically built into MFL degrees at many British universities (see Alred and Byram, 2006 for an elaboration).¹⁴ This type of stay abroad does not require students to accrue ECTS points while away and students are encouraged or even required (by the home institution and/or in order to qualify for an Erasmus grant) to have a job of some sort while away. They are not instructed where to go, but it has to be a country which is recognised as being part of the German/ French/ Spanish/ .../ speaking-world depending on which language(s) they are studying. The only real difference between this type of ‘year abroad’ and the ICP is the length of time spent away.

Therefore although studies which look at intercultural communicative competence development and stays abroad are plentiful, as the table above demonstrates, once the ICP has been identified for the kind of short stay abroad it is and the context in which it is taken by students at a German university, it becomes clearer that there is so far little research on this kind of short stay abroad that has been undertaken.

A final thought is that the ICP was set up with the aim of providing an opportunity for language students to develop their intercultural communicative competence (ICC) while living and working in the ‘target culture’; specifically it is aimed at students who otherwise might only have spent limited or no time living outside their own national borders. One assumption behind the ICP is that time in an English-speaking country is inherently beneficial for the students’ learning of English and ICC development and the continuation of the ICP suggests this assumption has been validated (Woodman, 2008). However, the idea that time living abroad will automatically lead to ICC development or foreign language proficiency has been questioned in the literature (Wilkinson, 1997; Farag, 1997; Coleman, 1998; Golubeva, 2003; Sercu, 2005; Holmes & O’Neill, 2012).

14 This is referring to the more ‘traditional’ year abroad because British universities increasingly offer a variety of options for students who combine MFL studies with other subjects such as business administration or international relations, for example.

One of the most widespread myths concerning language learning is that the only way to really learn the language of a foreign country is to go and live there. It is a myth shared alike by teachers and students of foreign languages. (Coleman, 1998: 46)

Studies which contribute towards broadening the understanding of what kind of development takes place on short stays abroad, which particular elements of ICC can develop, and in what way that impact on participants' perceptions can help researchers and especially course designers to make informed choices about what kind of programme to offer at their institutions and how to best prepare students for a stay abroad.

1.3 Research questions and objectives

This study seeks to discover what the Intercultural Project is providing for the students of English who participate in it, particularly in terms of the institutional aims of the project which are stated as: *to develop intercultural communicative competence and to learn about oneself*. It remains a relatively rare innovation in English studies at universities in Germany, despite high levels of student mobility, and so research into its effect will be welcomed by EFL professionals in the German setting.

From the theory it is helpful to establish what can be understood by the term intercultural communicative competence, discovering the current state of the field regarding this competence and why it is the aim for a project of this kind. Theoretically there is also a focus on the state of the field regarding the development and measurement of this competence, particularly in the context of a stay abroad. Once having established an understanding of the term, in the empirical study the concept is then broken down into constituent parts which are turned into survey questions and foci of interviews and email correspondence in order to gather data regarding participants' perspectives. The aim is to discover which elements of ICC have the potential to develop on a *short* stay abroad of this kind and which elements have less potential to develop, according to the participants' own perceptions.

The empirical study takes an emic perspective using both qualitative and quantitative research instruments, seeking to establish the participants' thoughts about their experiences, particularly regarding intercultural communicative competence development. Taking the emic perspective to its logical extreme, in the qualitative data, students are asked to define intercultural communicative competence themselves, and their comments are understood in terms of their own definitions. They are also shown the data after it has been represented by the researcher and their responses provide further data (as a form of triangulation/ validity and also to prevent the emic perspective morphing into an etic one). This is known as a member check (Sandelowski, 2008) and is an important feature of emic empirical study. Furthermore, although quantitative survey might normally be associated with an etic perspective, in this study the emic perspective remains throughout all the data sets. The study is mixed methods in design and the mixed methods approach is also applied in its most rigorous sense: the data analysis is conducted and presented in a mixed format rather than mixed methods refer-