Title
Language contact and pragmatic development in L2 Chinese during study abroad

Significance
The number of international students in China has increased rapidly in recent years. The unprecedented learning needs in Chinese necessitate a good understanding of how learners acquire different domains of language knowledge (e.g., grammar, pragmatics, etc.) during study abroad. However, pragmatic development in L2 Chinese during study abroad has received negligible attention in the literature. This study aims to fill the gap by investigating the development of the ability of making Chinese requests by American learners studying in China. Adopting a usage-based approach to SLA, this study also examines the extent to which the learners’ specific language-use experience can shape their gains in Chinese requests.

Theoretical framework
The usage-based approach to SLA posits that L2 learning occurs as a function of the frequency-biased abstraction of regularities from all the language-use experiences that one has encountered (Ellis, 2002, 2007). Hence, the amount of opportunities for processing specific target language features should explain how well the target feature is learnt. In interlanguage pragmatics, many studies showed a positive effect of study abroad experience on L2 pragmatic development in general (e.g., Nakamura, 2005; Olshtain & Blum-Kulka, 1985; Schauer, 2006), yet empirical findings also point to the possibility that L2 pragmatic development during study abroad is largely determined by the specific learning opportunities that the learning context can offer (e.g. Barron, 2002; Matsumura, 2001; Taguchi, 2008). This observation has yet to be tested empirically, and the present study is designed for this purpose.

Research procedure
The participants were 23 American learners of Chinese with no prior study abroad experience. They were enrolled in intermediate level Chinese classes in a 15-week program at a university in Beijing. A computerized Oral Discourse Completion Task (ODCT) was administered twice in week 1 (pretest) and week 14 (posttest). The ODCT consists of 8 hypothetical request-making situations belonging to four types of requests: making small requests to friends, making big requests to friends, making small requests to professors, and making big requests to professors. A Request Situation Judgment Questionnaire was also administered in week 14 in order to quantify the amount of contact the participants had with the target request-making situations during study abroad. Baseline data were collected from 20 Chinese undergraduates, who completed the same ODCT. The learners’ ODCT request utterances will be coded and their pretest and posttest ODCT performances will be compared. In addition, the scores from the Request Situation Judgment Questionnaire will be analyzed in relation to the ODCT gains to examine the relationship between the amount of language contact and pragmatic development. The findings of this study will be discussed in relation to how to maximize learners' pragmatic gains in a study abroad context.

Major findings
Data collection was finished and data analysis is in progress. The study is expected to be completed by the end of February 2010.

References
Acquisition, 24, 143-188.