IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN THE YORUBA GROUP PROJECT ABROAD: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF LANGUAGE USE

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IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION IN THE YORUBA GROUP
PROJECT ABROAD: DISCOURSE ANALYSIS
OF LANGUAGE USE

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
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in

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by
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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................... ii

ABSTRACT ................................................................................................................................. vii

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................... 1
  1.1. Background ....................................................................................................................... 1
  1.2. Motivation .......................................................................................................................... 5
  1.3. Methodology ..................................................................................................................... 8
  1.4. Significance ....................................................................................................................... 12

CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW .......................................................................................... 14
  2.1. Study abroad .................................................................................................................... 14
  2.2. Study Abroad and Identity ............................................................................................... 15
  2.3. Nigerian Americans in Historical Perspective ................................................................. 20
  2.4. The Notion of Identity ...................................................................................................... 22
  2.5. Identity in Linguistic Anthropology .................................................................................. 23

CHAPTER 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ............................................................................ 25
  3.1. Discourse Transcription ................................................................................................. 25
  3.2. Linguistic Anthropology: Discourse and Discourse Analysis .......................................... 27

CHAPTER 4. LANGUAGE USE AND PARTICIPANT’S IDENTITIES ................................ .......... 30
  4.1. Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 30
  4.2. Demilade .......................................................................................................................... 33
  4.3. Sayo .................................................................................................................................. 38
  4.4. Imo ..................................................................................................................................... 39
  4.5. Ayo ..................................................................................................................................... 42

CHAPTER 5. LANGUAGE USE AND PARTICIPANT’S RELATIONSHIPS .................................. 47
  5.1. Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 47
  5.2. Study Abroad/YGPA ......................................................................................................... 47
5.3. Nigeria ................................................................. 51
5.4. Nigerians in Nigeria ................................................ 53
5.5. Host Families ......................................................... 56
5.6. United States .......................................................... 57
5.7. Home ................................................................ 59
5.8. Nigerian Americans And Identity Claim: My Reflection .......... 60
5.9. Nigerian Americans and National/Ethnic Identity ...................... 60

CHAPTER 6. THEMATIC PRE-OCCUPATION .......................................... 70
6.1. Introduction ................................................................ 70
6.2. Admiration for Yoruba Culture, Nigeria and Africa .................... 71
6.3. Family support/Needs to interact with relatives .......................... 72
6.4. College as an agent of linguistic and cultural exposure .................. 73
6.5. YGPA as an agent for social relationships and personal transformation .................. 74
6.6. YGPA as an agent of cultural and linguistic depth/connections ........... 75
6.7. Host Families as agents of socio-cultural and linguistic transmission .......... 76
6.8. Cultural, Linguistic and National Identification ............................ 77
6.9. Accent as a defining factor for group acceptance .......................... 77
6.10. YGPA Structure as Cause of Intragroup Conflict ........................ 78

7  CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION .......................................................... 85
7.1. Avenues for Future Research ............................................... 87

APPENDIX 1. IRB APPROVAL ......................................................... 88

APPENDIX 2. INTERNET CONSENT FORM ...................................... 89

APPENDIX 3. QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS ................................... 91

REFERENCES ............................................................................ 92

VITA ......................................................................................... 92
ABSTRACT

This research examines the experiences of five Nigerian Americans who participated in the Yoruba Group Project Abroad in the year 2018. After taking classes on Yoruba language at the basic, intermediate and advanced levels in their various universities here in the US, the students traveled to Nigeria in the summer of 2018 to immerse themselves in the native speakers’ environment in Ibadan, Nigeria. While in Ibadan, they were paired with Nigerian host families (Yoruba speakers) in order to have an overarching immersive experience. These students constitute the population of this research. Using a qualitative research method and an in-depth online interviews, participants are asked about their various experiences while on the program. With the use of the theoretical frameworks of Discourse Transcription and Discourse Analysis, participants’ language use is examined. The purpose of this analysis is to reveal how these participants use language to communicate their personal, ethnic and national identities- how they position “themselves” and “others”. More specifically, participants’ identities and affiliations before and after the program is examined. This analysis also considers the after-effects of the study abroad program on the participants.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

I'm a Nigerian American. I'm Nigerian. I'm Yoruba. I feel like I'm all of them, you know, it's very much, I'm one over the other and in all honesty I can’t say I'm Nigerian because I'm also American and I was raised here and the American culture is very influential in who I am. But at the same time, If I can isolate one over the other, you know, I can’t say I’m American, because that's, that's not completely true. Neither can I say I'm Nigerian because that's not completely true at the same time. So, I'm Nigerian American and my ethnicity happens to be Yoruba, you know. So, that's how I would define myself if I have to. If I had to define myself, I'm Nigerian American. But most of the time when people ask me, Oh, where are you from? with that question, I just told them I'm Nigerian. (AYO)

So, I do identify myself as Nigerian American only because I was born here, and that's it. Um, but I’ll definitely side more my Nigerian side than anything American. I think the only reason I'm American, honestly, because I was born here, and that is it. (IMO)

Yeah, so I'd say that I identify as a Nigerian American because I feel like I have a foot firmly planted on both cultures. Like, I know them… extremely familiar with the American culture and knowing them extremely familiar Nigerian culture. (SAYO)

It is inspiring to carry out research on five Nigerian Americans who can be categorized as the fourth generation. The excerpts above are some of the responses from participants regarding how they identify themselves. Unlike some older generations whose lived experiences have had a huge influence on their identities claim (that is, they identify as simply Americans) these participants seem confident of their sense of belonging to streams of nationalities and ethnicity despite being immersed more in the culture of the United States, thus, reflecting the complexity of their identities.

Globalization reinforces the complex feature of the notion of identity. When describing the concept of identity, individual’s self-worth and awareness of their socio-cultural belonging are usually pushed to the fore. Hence, identity projects a sense of understanding one’s personality. In today’s globalized world, however, this notion of self seems to be complicated as individuals
through agency and power assume different social responsibilities based on the socio-cultural context they find themselves.

One of the ways globalization contributes to these complexities is visibly seen in the migration of people from their homelands to another environment. The reason they migrate may be due to displacement from their original settlement or to better their lives. Europe and North America are the focal place of migration with majority of migrants being Africans, Central Americans and Asians. Among these Africans are Nigerians who leave their homes for the United States to empower themselves (for socio-political and economic opportunities).

In the process of migration, Nigerians are bound to experience an unfamiliar socio-cultural and political system, and thus, the need for some personal adjustment which will definitely influence their identities. This personal shift aligns with Sökefeld’s (1999) notion of lack of consistency in people’s identity and the fact that people’s identities are formed through their life experiences. Over the years, many of these immigrants have mapped out suitable strategies for their survival. To them, the United States is home because the environment avails them of the opportunities they are denied in their home country.

At present in the United States, there are four generations of Nigerian Americans (Kalu 2003). While the first three generations can be described as the ones who became Americans via change in their citizenship status and naturalization, the fourth generation are either children of these immigrants who are born and have lived all their lives in the States or Nigerian-born children who were brought to the States. Certainly, these different generations will have distinct self-representations most especially because of their lived experiences and socio-cultural backgrounds. In his article entitled “‘Just black’ or not ‘just black?’” ethnic attrition in the Nigerian-American second generation,” Amon (2019) examines the identities of second generation Nigeria Americans
and reveals in his findings how some members of this second generation identify with the U.S. and claim the U.S. as their home because of their lived experiences. His findings reveal that among this generation, Nigerians with higher level of education lean towards Nigerian identity while those with “downward mobility” persist on U.S. identity. He attributed this ethnic “attrition” and “persistence” (Amon 2019:278) to socio-economic status of this generation.

To understand Nigerian Americans further, my research intends to consider a group of fourth generation Nigerian Americans with the aim of examining their personal and social identities. The question that readily comes to mind is how this group, most of whose lived experiences are in the United States, would identify themselves; either as Nigerians, Americans or Nigerian Americans, particularly as they deem it fit to study Yoruba in the States. Yoruba is one of the 450 (one of the three major) languages spoken in Nigeria. As one of the foreign languages taught in the United States, some Nigerian Americans study this language in their various higher institutions of education.

While one of the goals of the United States Department of State is to ensure its citizens learn foreign languages for their personal, career or nation building, this research intends to see how this program contribute to participants’ identities formation. The participation of fourth generation Nigerian American students in the Fulbright-Hays Yoruba Group Project Abroad provides an opportunity to investigate this question.

The Fulbright-Hays Advanced Yoruba Group Project Abroad is sponsored by the United States Department of Education to give both undergraduate and graduate students who have studied Yoruba language (for at least 2 semesters) in U.S. higher education institutions the privilege of having an intensive and immersive Yoruba learning experience in the native speaker’s environment (that is, Nigeria). Qualification to participate is dependent on a required competence
which is determined by a committee of Yoruba professors from universities across the U. S. (https://cfas.howard.edu/FH-yoruba-GPA).

The program, which usually is held at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria, aims at helping the students progress academically and career wise. It also helps them have a firsthand experience of Nigeria. To achieve this goal, participants are taught the Yoruba language in the country daily for six hours. Through their stay with the host families for 8 weeks, they have the opportunity to interact in the Yoruba language with native speakers. Participants also engage in cultural activities on and off campus. By going on excursions every week, they have the opportunity to view many Yoruba and Nigeria historical sites outside the campus.

As observed in Amon’s (2019) article on the transformation of second-generation Nigerian Americans in their ethnic identity over time, it is of interest to examine how strongly this fourth-generation identity with their parent’s heritage. Given the different lived experiences that distinguish them from earlier generations, their positionalities can be interrogated. Examining their language use will give insights on their identity construct. This study therefore considers how five fourth generation Nigerian Americans who participated in the Yoruba Group Project Abroad during the summer of year 2018 (June-July, 8 weeks) use language to construct their personal and social identities on the basis of their experience in the YGPA. Discourse transcription and discourse analysis are used to analyze these participants’ narratives in order to understand how their lived experiences influence their identities.

Past literature on Nigerian Americans has focused on their historical trajectory and experiences of the previous generations as immigrants in the United States, their ethnic identities in the diaspora, and the influence of social contexts on their personality (Uwazurike 2007; Strübel 2012; Awokoya 2012), with scarce literature on this present generation and their identity construction.
The available literature on the fourth generation, written by Sanuth & Mori (2018), examines only their translingual process. Moreover, they are grouped alongside other U.S. students who learn Yoruba.

Unlike the other generations who have had a taste of Nigeria’s socio-political and economic realities before migrating to the United States, this population of study, whose knowledge of the social realities of Nigeria is from their families and through the media, is worthy to be studied in order to understand their identities better. With this study in place, there will be a significant contribution to literature on Nigerian Americans particularly within the context of study abroad on issues relating to their personal and social identities. Also, studying identity in relations to language use places this research within the discipline of Linguistic Anthropology.

1.2. Motivation

My Fulbright experience between year 2018 and 2019 involved a surprising event that inspired my interest in study abroad and the notion of identity. I found myself amidst participants from fifty-two countries. I spent 10 months with seven of these participants on the Yale campus and also interacted with Yale college students, especially those taking Yoruba as a second language. It was a surprising learning experience for me. Being with the seven participants from Africa and other regions widened my understanding of cultural diversity, and I learned to accept, appreciate, and recognize our differences. The surprise in my learning phase began with a particular female Nigerian-American student whose passion for Yoruba language brought to my attention an appreciation of my own culture. One afternoon in the classroom, she unashamedly burst into uncontrollable tears and refused to be calmed. She wept because she couldn’t construct a simple sentence in Yoruba. She never hesitated to express her wishes: to at least be able to
construct a simple sentence in the language, to be able to hold simple conversations and to be able to communicate in Yoruba with her parents. She just wanted to do this for her parents and herself.

This scenario gave me an internal chastisement. Having lived in Nigeria for three decades, and now serving as a Yoruba cultural ambassador in the United State then, my pride in Yoruba language and culture was incomparable to hers. Prior to that incidence, I was a Nigerian in the United States willing to be Americanized. I was open to cultural assimilation and linguistic acculturation. I had experienced the linguistic social reality in Nigeria where having the prescribed standard “accent” of English as a second language learner, accrued me some social class status. I had experience regarding my language as a vernacular all through my academic journey. As a high school teacher, I had also erroneously influenced my students to think likewise. That was my social reality, one that is still very much ongoing. Though diasporic experiences are helping to address this damage, many have yet to see the beauty and the need to preserve these invaluable indigenous languages of ours.

Seeing this sense of belonging in this Nigerian-American student, I became interested in the worldviews of this generation of Nigerian Americans; particularly, I sought to understand the propelling forces that shape their identity claims. Through examining their language use, I am interested in capturing their experiences and identity claims by investigating Nigerian Americans who participated in studying Yoruba abroad (in Nigeria) during the summer of 2018. From personal experience, I am aware of the social transformation learning abroad could bring.

For instance, my participation in the Fulbright Foreign Language Teaching Assistantship (FLTA) program at Yale University in 2018 and 2019 gave me personal insights into the relationship between study abroad programs, language learning and identity construction. Prior to my coming to the United States, I was aware that being a second language learner in the
environment of native speakers would enhance my competence and performance in the target language. Although the essence of the scholarship was for me to teach and share my native Yoruba language and culture with Yale college students and members of New Haven community, I also had an opportunity to register for several courses as a student, and to interact with members of the community. Leaving Nigeria for the United States, I was excited that I would come out of the program, a fluent speaker of the English language. Little did I know, however, that the benefits of the program far outweighed competence in the target language.

This experience had lasting influence on my personality. Some of the students to whom I taught Yoruba language while on the program had had a study abroad experience in Nigeria, which they equally shared in the classroom. A unifying theme I observed from their talk about their experience that matched with mine was personal change and social transformation. This surprising development fueled my interest in the study abroad experience and identity construction through language use. In my observation, I discovered that as human beings, the situations in which we find ourselves can help shape us into exhibiting multiple identities.

Given the fact that the notion of identity is central to the field of Linguistic Anthropology (Hall and Bucholtz 2004) and researchers are continually conceptualizing the phenomenon within the framework of Anthropology, I believe this research work will help shed more light on language use and identity construction. With this research work, I intend to deploy a qualitative research method (in-depth online audio-visual interviews) to examine how participants construct their identities through language use.

Linguistic anthropologists are making efforts to define the notion of identity. Bucholtz and Hall (2004) posit that past research works on identity have been characterized by essentialism. This essentialist perspective sees identity as fixed and unchanging regardless of experience and
However, an anthropological perspective is a non-essentialist one. From this stance, identity is considered fluid, and influenced by people, time, experience, and environment. Hence, people make their identity known through “social performance” (Brodwin 2002) which makes it possible for them to have multiple identities which, usually, are visibly expressed in their language use. Bucholtz and Hall in their reconstruction of the concept maintain that researchers need to closely consider what speakers understand as their own identity via evaluation of their language use (Bucholtz and Hall 2004). It is within this framework that this study is carried out with Nigerian-American students who participated in a study abroad program in Nigeria to immerse themselves in the native Yoruba speaker’s environment for a short period of time. This research intends to address the following questions:

I. In what ways do participants position themselves and others in the account of their experiences through language use?

II. To what extent is the study abroad experience reflected in the after-effects of the program on student participants?

1.3. Methodology

All participants are female between the ages of 21 and 30. My initial plan was to travel to Nigeria to employ participant observation and use a qualitative (unstructured) interview method. I believe deploying this method would give me the advantage of witnessing participants’ reactions to and perceptions of things, practices, and people’s social realities in Nigeria. I was aware that the YGPA program allowed participants to live with host families, visit many historical sites, and participate in several Yoruba cultural activities. With these diverse immersive programs in mind,
learning about how participants learned to cherish Yoruba culture, family settings and Nigerian community wouldn’t be difficult. The pandemic, however, disrupted this plan.

During the summer of the year 2020, I interviewed via Zoom five Nigerian Americans who participated in the YGPA program from June through July of 2018. I was able to get these participants’ contact information from the program’s coordinator, Dr. Bayo Omolola, who I met at the conference for Less Commonly Taught Languages during my Fulbright program in March 2019. After obtaining approval from the IRB, I began the interview process by sending an email to 11 students who had been participants from 2018 and 10 participants from 2019. After two weeks without getting feedback from them, I sent them text messages, to which some of them responded. From observation, many of the participants have now graduated from their universities which rendered their email addresses non-functional.

At the end of the day, four participants from 2018 and only one participant from 2019 indicated their interest in participating. Having shown their willingness to participate, I emailed them an informed consent form to read through and sign. When these forms were returned, we scheduled dates for the interviews. Though we had to reschedule several times due to their busy schedules, we were able to make headway at last. The interviews (in-depth/unstructured) were then conducted online via Zoom- majorly audio as required by IRB (see appendix A) to protect participants’ privacy- in my room in my apartment in Baton Rouge.

Depending on the participant, the duration of the interview was from half an hour to an hour. Participants were asked open-ended questions. To begin each interview, I briefly introduced myself and explained my interest in study abroad and identity to them. I informed the participants that their information would be treated as anonymous. The English language was used to conduct the interviews for mutual intelligibility between researcher and participants. Participants were
asked a wide range of open-ended questions that revolved around their family background, upbringing, personal profiles, their motivation for studying Yoruba and participating in the YGPA program, their study abroad experiences, their perception of the program, Yoruba culture, Nigeria and America, and the influence of the study abroad experiences on their self-representations (see appendix B). Each interview ended with question about who participants see themselves as (that is, a Nigerian, an American or a Nigerian-American).

The interviews can be described as a naturally occurring conversation because they were audio, participants were relaxed, and they spoke freely like we were having a chat though they knew the conversation was being recorded. I believe their enthusiasm to share their experiences made the conversation exciting as they were proud lovers of the Yoruba culture, who were willing to express their joy in having participated in the program. All the participants earned college degrees. While three of these participants had just graduated from college, two of them are currently graduate students. Among these participants, four studied African studies while the other one is studying medical sciences. One thing that connects these participants is their love for Yoruba language and culture. They made the interviews enjoyable and they were quick to state their availability for follow up interviews.

Notably, I am not a Nigerian American. I was born in Nigeria and I have lived in Nigeria for three decades. I identify myself as a Nigerian and my ethnicity a Yoruba. Having experienced the socio-political, economic and religious realities of Nigeria (inadequate social infrastructure, linguistic complexity, leadership issues, educational struggles) I find it difficult to regard Non-Nigerian born people without these lived realities as being Nigerians. I had the opportunity to interact with Nigerian Americans within the context of Yale classrooms for only 10 months as a Fulbright participant. From my interaction with them (like the participants of this research), their
passion for Nigerian culture is impressive but I assume the reason is due to their lack of lived Nigeria experience.

Because having grown up mostly in Nigeria has shaped my perception of who a Nigerian is, and my few months’ interaction with Nigerian Americans coupled with my master’s program in Linguistic Anthropology have influenced my notion of my own identity, it is certain that the interviews conducted and the way I interpret them will reflect this bias. Hence, my research entails a reflexive voice which I believe will provide further insight regarding my analysis of these participants’ personal and social identities. I intend to explore how these participants communicate their identities in this regard. Pseudonyms which only the researcher can identify are used to protect participants’ privacy.

Discourse transcription was used to record on paper the data generated from these interviews. For this transcription, texts were automatically generated by the Zoom application provided by LSU. This automatic method has the format of lines, and marks seconds. Though most of the texts were accurate, I listened to the recordings repeatedly and made necessary corrections to mis-produced Yoruba and English words. To make the text readable, I removed repeated words and pauses which the computer included. Repeated words and pauses were removed to avoid misrepresentation of participants. Repetitions, for instance, can be mere discourse markers or emphasis. In order not to falsely claim the latter, I removed the markers when necessary.

Discourse analysis is used to investigate how participants construct their individualities through their language use. I found that participants had divergent reasons for participating in the program. This reason might be to trace their roots, or for career gain. Having lived most of their lives in the United States, their study abroad experiences inevitably shaped their personalities. Responding to questions asked during the interview, participants used self-narratives to illustrate
their experiences and social relationship with others. Ochs and Capps (1996) identify self-narratives as communicative events that help one make meanings from how experiences are made and formed. From this knowledge therefore, participants’ narratives are examined to determine how their experiences in the program influence their individualities.

1.4. Significance

Knowledge about the effects of study abroad programs on identity formation will benefit future participants, the United States, and future researchers. Through this research, Nigerian Americans who intend to participate in the program in the future would be psychologically prepared and be kept abreast of the realities of the YGPA program. Nigerian Americans make up a significant part of the United States community. Their immersion in the Yoruba language and Nigerian culture has a huge socio-cultural component that would be integrated in the United States after their return to the States.

This research work is also important because it will help contribute to the existing literature on the notion of language and identity within the framework of Linguistic Anthropology. Many studies in the past have explored the benefits of study abroad program on participants’ proficiency in the second language and cross-cultural perception (Anderson 2016, Graham 2015, Jochum 2014, Lenkaitis 2019, Li and Liu 2017, and Pinar 2016). Little has been done in relation to study abroad experience and identity construction, especially in Africa. Hence, there is scant literature on study abroad programs in Africa, while there are several works published on study abroad in Europe, and Central and South America. This research will therefore help contribute to literature on study abroad within the context of Africa.

Through the study of participants’ narratives, attempt on anthropological perspectives on identity will help contribute to data availability for future scholars and researchers of identity.
Moreover, the study will provide a deeper understanding on individual identity construction. This study is also significant for reflecting on how language is key to the lifelong individual socialization process.

The next chapter reviews literature on study abroad, language, identity, and linguistic identity. Next is chapter three, which examines the theoretical frameworks—Discourse transcription and Discourse analysis. Chapter four continues the discussion on how participants position themselves in relation to other people and institutions. Also, in this chapter, the major themes from the participants’ narratives are discussed and analyzed to show how participants position themselves and others. Chapter five discusses the findings/conclusion and makes necessary suggestions for future researchers.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Study abroad

Current social reality of globalization and the need for collaborative cultural integration has greatly influenced students’ participation in short term study abroad programs. In the United States, there has been a rise from 11.6 in the year 2010/2011 to 17 percent in the year 2016/2017 among college students who participated in short term study abroad programs as documented in the “Institute of International Education’s (2018) Open Doors report” (Lenkaitis 2019). The benefits of participating in such programs cannot be over-emphasized, especially for new language learners. Apart from cultural competence and linguistic gains that have been widely documented in the literature, participants’ experiences, when narrated, are also valuable to both narrators and researchers. While recounting their experiences, narrators are given an opportunity to reflect on their past experiences. Of importance to language researchers is the opportunity to evaluate how narrators position themselves and construct their notion of self through language use during these interactional activities.

Reviewing past literature on short term study abroad programs, researchers have mostly studied the cross-cultural/linguistic impact of the program on participants and its usefulness in pedagogy (Lenkaitis 2019; Allen 2010 and Anderson et. al 2016), with few works that pay attention to study abroad and identity construction through language use. Lenkaitis’ work (2019), for example, emphasises on intercultural benefits for participants in the international study program. Analyzing the five days learning experiences of just two learners of Spanish on a study abroad program, she reveals that the program helped develop the students’ intercultural competence. Allen (2010) studied six intermediate level students on a study program studying
French from the perspective she called activity theory to investigate the language-learning motivation for these participants. Her study reveals varying degrees of motivations which are accompanied by desired goals demonstrated by the research population. Although motivation influences students’ learning behavior, activity generated and other factors (internal/external) make motivation dynamic. Hence, activities provide a contextual platform for learning. The implication for this in pedagogy therefore calls for intervention which employs diverse instructional approaches that produce a transformative learning result (Allen 2010). Similarly, Anderson et al. (2016) investigated the impact of a study abroad program on the listening comprehension of the participants and concluded that setting plays a significant role in generating a transformative result. By grouping participants, the group with interventions are identified as producing maximal result.

Several other studies are based on enhancing homestay experience (Knight and Schmidt-Rinehart 2009), study abroad and language proficiency (Thompson and Lee 2014), study abroad and adaptability (Sato 2014), study abroad and oral proficiency gains (Jochum 2014), study abroad and willingness to communicate (Graham 2015), and study abroad and intercultural competence (Kinginger 2013).

2.2. Study Abroad and Identity

Literature on study abroad and identity has often emphasized the effect of identity traits (introvert/extrovert, gender) on language learning opportunities (Kinginger, 2008; Polany, 1995; Siegal. 1996; Twombly 1995). Other related studies reveal how participants’ identities are affected in the new communities in which they find themselves (Sato 2010; Ellwood 2011; Kinginger 2013), the impact of the program on participants’ proficiency and competence in the second language and the development of second language identities with less discussion on how identity
is constructed (Benson et al. 2012; Barron 2016; Jackson 2008; Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos 2011; Edwards & Ye 2018; Miller 2010; Higgins 2012). Sato’s (2010) narrative inquiry studied Japanese students on a short-term study abroad program with the aim of examining the link between second language learning and identity construction. Concentrating on how the participants (who are second language learners) used the second language to construct their identities, he revealed that the program had lasting impact on the participants as seen in their abilities to “construct new target language positions” and their active improvement as speakers and learners (Sato 2010: 37). His study also revealed that power relations between language users determine the type of identities language learners project in social interactions. The construction of second language identities are, therefore, determined by social context and social interaction.

Relatedly, in Kinginger (2013), a “holistic qualitative” approach is deployed to study how identities shape language learning opportunities. She further examines the way in which identity related pragmatics are developed. From her observation, when language learners were categorized as foreigners and treated as such by the host community (especially the host families), some conflicts were created. These conflicts not only discouraged participants, but also limited the learners’ self-expressions. Hence, labeling language learners as foreigners “can limit” (Kinginger 2013:349) their access to the target language. For her, language learners should be treated with an open mind and given the opportunity to negotiate and determine what they can learn during the program if they are to have access to learning opportunities.

In another development, Ellwood (2011) employed an ethnographic study of four students in an English-language program at an Australian University to show the way identity is conceptualized and its implication in pedagogy. Ellwood’s study aimed at reconceptualizing the notion of identity change within the context of study abroad using the Deleuzian concepts of
molar, molecular, and lines of flight. The concept of molar is akin to the traditional classroom practices in which both students and teachers are aware of their roles. The molar therefore represents the fixed aspect of identities that conform to societal norms and convention which are hard to change. On the other hand, she described the molecular as the connections people get from social interaction in which they may either affect others or be affected by other people, while the lines of flights are the periods of unexpected change in peoples’ identities. Using these concepts, Ellwood argued that human “connection” with and “disconnections” (974) from one another play significant affective roles in changing their identities as against the argument that the power for identity change resides in the students who participate in the program. Hence, Ellwood attributed the cause of identity change to social connections.

Phil Benson et al. (2012) study the impact of the study abroad program on participants’ second language identities by focusing on how participants’ can function well in the second language; this includes personal identities of participants as second language learners and their competence. Using the data derived from the interviews of four participants (out of nine participants) who participated in a study abroad program in Australia, Canada and the United Kingdom. Phil Benson et al. examined the impact of the program on each participant’s second language identity. At the end of this study, they found that though the program impacted the participants differently based on their individual differences, they all recorded some development in their second language identities. Hence, they opined that the study abroad program context gives participants the prospects to develop their second language identities. Using short story analysis, on the other hand, Barkhuizen (2017) investigated the multilingual identity of one of the participants from the above study (that is Phil Benson et al. (2012), and revealed that the
participant’s “second language proficiency”, “second language identity development”, and “linguistic self-concept” (Barkhuizen 2017:10) are interconnected.

Jackson (2008), on the other hand, used post structural and socio-cultural theories to examine the relationship between language and cultural learning, and identities in second language learners within the context of a study abroad program. Unlike Benson’s (2012) study in which study abroad was identified as a contributing factor to learner’s competence development, Jackson’s study reveals that study abroad programs do not always determine competence but participants’ real experiences as seen in this study in which some learners acquired no development. He then posed that learners’ actual experiences in familiar environments transform their identities. In another development, Bardori-Harlig & Bastos (2011) examined the role of proficiency, length of stay and intensity of interaction in determining the recognition and production of conventional speech acts among selected U.S. Spanish learners. His findings revealed that intensity of interaction plays an important role in recognizing conventional interaction; both proficiency and intensity of social interaction are important in the production of conventional speech acts while duration of stay has no significant effect whatsoever.

From a sociological angle with emphasis on of agency and identity, Edwards & Ye (2018) explored how study abroad experience impacted the personal identity of Chinese doctoral students in the UK, using focus groups and semi-structured interview methods. Their findings reveal that the program avails participants of the opportunity for personal transformation and identity development. Personal reflexivity helps participants acquire novel perspectives of socio-cultural values and appreciate their academic field. They identified self-reflexivity and self-development as being fluid and interconnected. For them, agency is fundamental to language acquisition, and both context and agency lead to competence. (Edwards & Ye 2018). Miller (2010) also studied
Chinese students on a study abroad program and showed that the participants use language to reflect self-exclusion/inclusion from social interaction. Also, Miller (2010) showed that minority groups reconstruct their identities as defined by the context in which they find themselves. Hence, language is used for self-representation (69), social practices, and group membership (71). Identity is established across differences and knowledge of self emerges in relation to others (Miller 2010:72). Language is used to identify with a group, differentiate oneself from others, identify oneself as other, and as linguistic capital.

In her dissertation entitled *Understanding Heritage and Ethnic Identity Development through Study Abroad: The Case of South Korea*, Beausoleil (2008) studied University of California undergraduate students who participated in the Education Abroad Program in Seoul, South Korea for the summer 2007 session. Investigating their reasons for participating in the program using mixed research methods (qualitative and quantitative), she identified the following: ethnic heritage, search for cultural roots, linguistic background, and identity issues. Examining how they were affected by ethnic identity issues, also, her finding revealed language skills as the prominent factor.

Outside the context of the study abroad, Higgins (2012) reflects on globalization and second language users’ identity construction. She opines that second language learning in this era of globalization doesn’t only avail language learners of the opportunity to be active and functional in the first language but also makes new forms of identity available to them. Apart from this development, learners are further opened to linguistic diversities in several environments. She, therefore, calls for new theories on identity construction alongside language learning and use.

With the concentration of the above research works on proficiency, competence, personal development, and second language identities within and outside the context of study abroad
program, the notion of constructing identities are pushed to the fore. Constructing identities here means how speakers (study abroad participants and second language learners) construct their personal and social identities and make that of “others” known. While these studies reviewed were considered within the context of Asia, Australia, Europe, and North South America, this research is on identity construction through language use of participants on a study abroad program within the context of Africa, this time around in Nigeria.

2.3. Nigerian Americans in Historical Perspective

Nigeria is a multi-lingual/ethnic country located in the western part of Africa. Its size can be compared with the sizes of New Mexico, Arizona and California, combined. The name, Nigeria, is derived from the largest river (known as River Niger) in the country. Nigerians are widely spread all over the world for several reasons like business, studies, professional development, career path, greener pastures, security, and economic purposes (Oparaoji 2015).

The United States is home to many Nigerian-immigrants. Tracing the historical presence of Nigerians in the United States, the New York based Institute of International Education reported that three Nigerian students were documented as being in the United States in 1926 (Oparaoji 2015). Subsequently, this number has drastically increased, as there are Nigerian communities across the United States at present. Report has it (as seen in Ette 2012) that the first wave of Nigerians, who came to the United States in between 1920 and 19444, came to further their studies through sponsorship/financial assistance from their parents, relatives and institutions. Completing their studies, they returned home to apply their knowledge and re-establish themselves.

Seeing the accomplishments of and the prestige conferred on these returnees, the second wave decided to follow suit from 1950 to 1960 (Ette 2012). Rather than returning home after their studies, however, many of these Nigerians decided to stay and acquire their U.S. citizenship,
because the Nigerian economy, which was once blossoming, had declined. They, therefore, remained and many of them brought their family members to the States. The third wave were Nigerians who left Nigeria for the United States in search of greener pastures, for studies, business purposes, social security, and several other reasons (Kalu 2003). This took place around the year 1971.

Having obtained their citizenship/become naturalized, many of these immigrants gave birth to and raised their children in the United States. Some brought their children to the U.S. while their children were young, and some Nigerian children were adopted by Americans. These children of immigrants who have lived their entire lives on the shore of the U.S. and have been immersed in the language and culture of the United States are referred to as Nigerian Americans. Some of these children, especially those of Yoruba descent, study their heritage language here in the States as a second language and have been participating in study abroad immersion programs in Nigeria.

Bucholtz and Hall (2004) posit that situations determine individual positioning and self-awareness; it is therefore interesting to examine how these groups of people position themselves through their language use in narrating and juxtapositioning their lived experiences in the United States during and after the study abroad program in Nigeria. Would they identify themselves as Nigerians, Americans or both, as Nigerian Americans?

On the other hand, this research would also examine the language use in relations to the attitude of the host families towards Yoruba language and culture. One of the negative effects of language contact between Nigerian languages and English is linguistic and cultural degradation, this means loss of language and culture or disinterest in language due to language/cultural contact or integration. At present, many Nigerians prefer western language and culture to Nigeria’s. In fact, many parents discourage their children from speaking their native languages. Educational
institutions are not also left out, as teachers forbid students from speaking their indigenous languages in school. Hence, many young Nigerians lack fluency in their native languages. This language attitude a direct legacy of colonialism and British influence on Nigerian education. Until the mind of the people is decolonizes, as suggested by Ngugi’ wa Thiong’o in the article, Language is a War Zone: A Conversation with Ngugi’ wa Thiong’o, this linguistic attitude will persist. Since host families accommodate Nigeria-Americans in their home to help immerse them in Nigerian language and culture, it would be fascinating to investigate how participants perceived this linguistic attitude. According to Christie (2002: 16) “language does not just passively reflect a pre-existing social reality. It is an active agent in constructing that reality.” Identity construction remains pivotal to reflecting social reality.

Since language has been identified as a key player in pushing social reality to prominence, how participants construct their identities is well thought-out in this study.

2.4. The Notion of Identity

The concept of identity has been considered from diverse perspectives. Scholars have spoken about ethnic and national identity, regional identity, language identity, vocational identity, and personal identity (Mutanen 2010) among other categories. For the purpose of this thesis, personal and social identity are considered. It is important to note that identity categories like ethnic, national, religion and language fall under the social classifications being considered in this thesis.

Bucholtz and Hall (2004) refer to the literal definition of the concept of identity to mean sameness. With this definition, identity is regarded to be biological, static, and intrinsic. Bulchotz and Hall, along with several other identity researchers (i.e. Goffman 1956; Lawler 2014; Tacium 1993) disagree with this definition and argue that identity is fluid, multifaceted and socially
constructed. To Bucholtz and Hall, identifying this identity is a complex phenomenon and classifying identity with the features of biology duly limits its conceptualization.

Relatedly, Ervin Goffman (1956) locates this complexity in what he terms performance. He suggests that people’s attitude and behavior are influenced by social context- that is places, interlocutors (audiences) and the impression they want to put forward or manage. Hence, people give meaning to their actions, other people and different situations through the way they present themselves. Since social contexts affect human behaviors, defining their identities as fixed and intrinsic poses a huge problem because such categorization may result in misrepresentation Bucholtz and Hall (2004). Therefore, identity is located in social relationships and not ‘within’ an individual as an internal property (Lawler 2014).

2.5. Identity in Linguistic Anthropology

According to Bucholtz and Hall (2004:373), the concept of “identity” in Linguistic Anthropology has been studied to address questions related to colonialism, power between societies, and socio-political inequalities. They noted, however, that such studies are characterized by essentializing identity; that is, grouping categories as being similar or different based on certain attitudes or emotions that are naturally or biologically endowed to humans. An example is categorizing African Americans as being different from other cultures. Categorizing women as having a particular language different from men is another example which neglects inter/intra gender similarities and differences (Hall and Bucholtz 2004: 374). A similar example is LGBTQ language use.

The notion of identity has taken a novel perspective different from how it was perceived and constructed in the past. The essentialists were basically concerned with differences among cultures. As Gumperz and Cook-Gumperz (1982) note, space and geography are key determinants
of cultural interpretation. While it is true that biological traits and geographical placement of humans play an important role in shaping their personalities, contemporary social realities reflect how individuals demonstrate identities in the politics of their language use.

Globalization has shaped the world by eradicating boundaries and placing people in different situations of self-positioning. Hence, “as the product of situated social action, identities may shift and recombine to meet new circumstances” Bucholtz and Hall (2004:376). Stets & Burke (2000) agree with this postulation; they posit that people’s possession of multiple identities makes them members of different groups, gives them different features; and makes several social roles available to them. A good instance is greetings among Wolof speaking people where in performance, language is used to confer higher status on individuals based on social function (Irvine 1974). Language is a social practice through which speakers organize their experiences and negotiate their identities (Hall and Bucholtz 2004: 502). As speakers therefore find themselves in different communities, different dimensions of identity are brought to bear for them to be accepted in such communities. Versluys (2007) posits that people, in a bid to define themselves and other people, take on different positions and shift their identities in conversations. Interlocutors, through interaction, employ different tactics to negotiate meaning in the moment. Identity and meaning are not categories imposed beforehand.

In line with the above view that language is dynamic, and that identities are multiple and laced with complexities and dynamism based on social context and pragmatics (Sato 2010), my research explores the notion of identity construction by Nigerian Americans on a study abroad program.
CHAPTER 3. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1. Discourse Transcription

Du Bois (1991) defined transcription as a theory because the way transcription is done goes a long way in reflecting transcribers’ linguistic theories and shaping the data, particularly since transcriptions are done with particular research goals in mind (Ochs 1979). This research, for instance, will analyze the transcribed text from five participants’ interviews with the goal of examining their language use and their identity construction based on their study abroad experiences. Discourse transcription will, therefore, be used as a theoretical framework for this research.

Du Bois et al. (1993) defined discourse transcription as “the process of creating a representation in writing of a speech event so to make it accessible to discourse research” (Du Bois et al. 1993:72). This definition is a window that reflects discourse transcription as a process. This process begins with the goal of transcribing the speech event and continues to its interpretation within a frame of reference. This goal is defined by the research questions a researcher seeks to address. When these research questions are put into appropriate perspectives and speech events, they become accessible.

In other words, accessibility to speech events is dependent on the goal of the research. Because speaking is unique and different from writing, it becomes paramount to indicate some of the nuances- which might be pauses, false start, hesitations, that shows how interlocutors negotiate meaning in social interactions- visible in speech accessible in the transcript discourse. Hence, the rendering of transcription is dependent on the discourse purpose. For example, “oral historians”, “phoneticians”, “journalists” and “dialectologists” Du Bois (1991:73) have different reasons and
goals for transcribing. With this diversity at work, there exists no ultimately correct transcription version; hence, biases are inevitable.

To address these biases and for researchers to be reflective in their transcription, discourse theory becomes important. Being reflexive makes researchers conscious of the effect of the transcript on the participant’s representation. This practice therefore means that what researchers transcribe and how they transcribe are important to the research process. For example, lack of reflexivity may reflect some stereotypes which are not without implication. A non-reflexive discourse may also result in some inconsistencies which render the transcript questionable (Bucholtz 2000).

Bucholtz (2000) identifies two styles of discourse transcription which are naturalized and denaturalized. While naturalized transcription entails verbatim production of interview text with the inclusion of pauses and other discourse markers, denaturalized transcriptions are edited to exclude discourse markers and pauses to achieve smooth flow of speech and remain as conventional as possible. These transcription styles are used depending on the research goals. Phoneticians and conversational analysts, for instance, may use the naturalized transcription to capture several speech markers which will be useful for their research goals. In this research, denaturalized transcription style is used because it suits the interpretive discourse of this research.

The transcribed texts were automatically generated by the computer communication system, lightly edited and left to be as natural as possible. Errors and mistakes were checked through repeated listening to participants’ audio interview. The advantage of this transcription technique is that it gives room for reflexive discourse (that is, conscious and consistent in the representation of participants). This method is limited in the sense that the computer automatic system generated several errors and mistakes which made the whole process time consuming. The
researcher had to repeatedly listen to the audio interviews to ensure participants’ discourse were properly coded. Discourse markers, pauses and some repetitive words were removed for free flow of speech but the transcribed texts were left as natural as possible.

3.2. Linguistic Anthropology: Discourse and Discourse Analysis

The definition of discourse varies depending on the angle from which it is being considered. The term can sometimes be regarded as “language in use” (Potter 2004: 607) or a linguistic concept that can be treated as a “mass noun” Johnstone (2018:2). The former definition is central to this study. By understanding discourse to be language in use, the functional and creative power of language is pushed to the fore. This power is enforced to encompass the interconnectedness between language and other meaning making systems when analyzing discourse (Johnstone 2018). Gee and Handford (2010), also defined discourse analysis as the study of language in use. Meaning is ascribed to language use based on the type of action carried out and the context surrounding such action. Interlocutors are using language to perform specific actions. Meaning is negotiated during social interaction. Hence, there is a need for shared knowledge and communion between and among speakers. When a priest, for instance, pronounces a man and a woman, husband and wife, in a church or as defined by the occasion of the event, the institution of marriage is created and becomes effective from thence. When a teacher, however, acts similarly for instruction purpose in pedagogy, the product of such interaction is mere knowledge sharing and not marital institutional creation. Hence, speakers mean things and do things with language Gee and Handford (2010:10). Discourse analysts are therefore interested in what speakers do with language.

Levinson (2000) identified two types of meaning in speakers’ use of language that are important to discourse analysts, “utterance type meaning” and “utterance-token” meaning also
known as “situated meaning” Levinson (2000:25). For utterance-type meaning, words, phrases, or structure have broad or general meaning. An example is the word “woman” which has the broad meaning of female adult. Another example is the structural meaning which can either indicate whether a noun is the subject or object of a sentence. While the subject of a sentence calls attention to itself, the object of a sentence is acted upon. Utterance meaning, on the other hand, means that the meaning of a word, a phrase, and a sentence structure is determined by the context of use. For example, the meaning of “staff” in the following sentences is defined by the context of its usage: the staff is a symbol of authority; the staff is broken. While the former has a symbolic meaning, the latter can be centered on a broken object.

In Potter (2004), discourse analysis is viewed from different perspectives. On the one hand, it refers to approaches undertaken by such wide-ranging approaches as conversational analysis, speech act theory, and narrative theory among others. On the other hand, it is seen as an analysis of discourse (Sinclair and Coulthard 1975) as cited by Potter (2004:607). Potter (2004) identified discourse as an interdisciplinary concept that cuts across disciplines like psychology, linguistics, literary studies, social history and anthropology. According to him, different traditions have emerged from discourse analysis. One tradition is an approach from linguistics that deals with how sentences are connected to achieve a coherent discourse. Some examples of linguistic elements that enhance coherence are the use of “however’, “but”, and “and” (Brown and Yule, 1983) as cited by (Potter 2004:608).

Another tradition is identified with the work of Foucault and Post-structuralism which considered how “discourse becomes objects and subjects” Potter (2004: 609). For example, the discourse of medicine can produce Corona virus as a distinctive and factual object while medical doctors constitute agents with “knowledge” and “authority” (Potter 2004: 608). Other traditions
are interactive discourse studies (Schiffrin 1994), conversational analysis (Van Dijk 1996) as cited by (Potter 2004).

In additions to these traditions is the identification of the following three principles of discourse analysis as practiced in the social sciences: it is action-oriented, situated and constructed (Potter 2004:609). Discourse is considered action-oriented in that it is seen as social actions interlocutors perform in a particular environment. These activities could be invitations, greetings, verbal duels, interviewing, consultation, counselling, or gossiping. Speakers are performing actions when they engage in the above activities Potter (2004). Being situated means it is located in “sequences of interaction” Potter (2004:610). The type of interaction interlocutors are engaged in determines the type of action, while the nature of discourse and its context of production determines the type of response. This is processual and context is not usually fixed (Potter 2004).

In the third principle, discourse is constructed, two levels of discourse construction which discourse analysts work with are identified (Potter 2010). One level is how “discourse is constructed from words, idioms, rhetorical devices” among others (Potter 2004:609). The other level is how discourse produces world versions which could be objective or subjective. Considering these two layers, in other words, discourse can be “constructed” or “constructive” Potter (2004:610).

For this research, discourse analysis is used to examine participants’ responses in line with John (1996) theoretical premise that discourse is used to construct reality, “versions” (John 1996:11) of the world, and co-produce meaning. More importantly, context is key to gaining insights into the relationships that exist between and among people. In addition, selected data were coded for recurring themes in line with the research goals. Participants’ illustrations are also presented for readers to make critical judgement.
CHAPTER 4. LANGUAGE USE AND PARTICIPANT’S IDENTITIES

4.1. Introduction

Various literatures on identity reviewed in this study establish that identity is fluid, multiple, dynamic, and constructed. Studying the experiences of the YGPA participants has helped push the above claim to the fore. Just like Goffman (1956) locates the multiplicities and creative nature of identities in performance, one can see the evidence of these features in the discourse of the study abroad participants. Speaking in English, which is the language they have maximum competence in, their identities become pronounced as they placed its development within different social contexts. Participants’ responses reveal their personal growth, development and socialization process. As seen in their language use, their self-identifications reflect them as students, language learners, progressive language learners, lovers of Yoruba culture, Yoruba language, Nigeria, and Nigerians. How these representations play out will be examined subsequently in their responses to various open-ended questions they were asked.

Iba

Can you tell me about your background and upbringing?

00:19 My family's originally from Nigeria. My dad is from Sagamu. 00:29My mom is from Ijebu. They moved here, I want to say some time in the mid-80s 1980s. At first, they lived in London for some time and then they came here.00:43Three older sisters, I mean, sorry, three older siblings. Two of them are my sisters. One of them is my brother, my eldest sister and brother was brought up in Nigeria very briefly, they left when she was, I think, about six or seven years old and he left when he was two or three 01:03And then my parents came into America and had me and my other sister as well and we moved to Brooklyn, New York. At first, so we lived in Brooklyn 01:12 for majority of my life, and then now we live in Houston, Texas. We moved there in 2017 01:20 Just in terms of culture wise and language, my mom and my dad always made it a point 01:27 to speak Yoruba to me so that way I always understood it, you know, when elders call from Nigeria, or you'd be at a function where there's Nigerian people there and they're speaking Yoruba. 01:40 So both my mom and my dad, I feel did a really great job of making sure I had a really great
foundational understanding of Yoruba and that I have no problem understanding Yoruba at all. So, 01:52 That's one thing that I really appreciated about my parents. (IBA)

The above statement was in response to the question Iba was asked about her family background and growing up in the U.S. As we interact, her language use shows her personal beliefs, her growth, attitude to her parents, and her stance on issues relating to Nigeria and the United States. This revelation, therefore, culminates into what I call her personal identities. She brings these traits to life as we go on to co-create her life experiences here in the United States and during her study abroad program in Nigeria. From her discourse, it is evident that she’s an American born whose parents are of Yoruba ethnic group, that is Sagamu and Ijebu (these are Yoruba tribes in the western geographical area of Nigeria). While the Yoruba ethnic group entails wider range of community that belongs to one of the six geo-political zones, the tribes are the various dialects within this cultural group.

Her parents, like most Nigerian immigrants who have a strong tie to and love for their culture, made sure that they instilled Yoruba language and culture in her. Though she couldn’t speak the language at first, she understood it. Her parents played huge roles in ensuring her understanding of the language. The extent to which her parents contributed to her second language identity is seen in her statement that both of her parents “did a really good job”. The tense “did” shows that the effort was made in the past while “really good job” reflects the degree of their effort as an appraisal. Iba is grateful to her parents for their effort in ensuring her understanding of the language (as seen in line 1:52 above where she says she “really appreciated” them).

Iba revealed she couldn’t speak Yoruba because she “ wasn't really surrounded with a lot of Nigerian people apart from her family” (line 02:06) while growing up. Another aspect of Iba’s self-representation is seen lines 02:08 and 02:16 where she doesn’t identify herself as black nor white. Describing the population of the elementary and high schools she attended, she says “the
schools I attended. It was either a lot of just if there are black people, they’re either Caribbean, and then a lot of white people as well. So, I didn't get to utilize the language.” Iba recorded some growth in her Yoruba language learning. Someone who only understood Yoruba but couldn’t speak now has the confidence in herself that she could speak the language as seen in her statement: “I do feel as though my understanding of it really reached a deeper level line” (line 05:10).

Her use of the emphatic “really”, and the expression “deeper level” shows her learning progress. The progress is seen in line 5:04 where she says “I make it a point to where even if I meet Yoruba person. Let's say on the street or I'm talking to someone, I always try to, you know, use Yoruba and speak Yoruba with them”. Iba doesn’t just love the language, she is also determined to learn it. In lines 05: 34 to 05:44 her love is seen on display in her expression that “I'm very much a person that's just very in love with Yoruba culture, everything about us down to how we celebrate weddings slash like naming ceremonies everything”. Her determination and willingness to learn the language are succinctly seen in line 06:59 “I will also be speaking English to my host family like teaching them how to speak in an American accent. And then I would also just be like, Yeah, I still want to learn Yoruba well, it will be helpful to just speak Yoruba a lot”.

Her account of culture shock places national issues in a larger context to depict national differences in terms of availability of infrastructure. She juxtaposes the availability of physical infrastructure in the United States with a lack of it in Nigeria as seen in the following lines: 15:32 “Took me a while to just adjust. You know how I was living the things that I was used to back in America versus the things that I needed to get used to being in Nigeria.15:51One of them being like electricity, obviously.”
The tenses “used to” and “needed to” depict the availability of reliable power in the States and a lack of reliable power in Nigeria respectively. The fact that it took her a while to adjust shows her discomfort and disappointment in the national system.

Iba is knowledgeable about and unhappy with the Nigerian political system. In line 18:24, she stated that she “was really prepared” to enlighten Nigerians with regards to politics because she believed the country has not progressed since its independence. Likening the country’s status to “downward hill” in line 18:35, she identifies issues like the “exchange rate” in line 18:41 and corruption. She blames the problem, however, on the Nigerian government. Seeing that corrupt practices permeate several sectors of the country, she believes the leaders should be held responsible for them. “I will never blame common people for that, because what you see is what you do” (Line 21:34). Using the pronoun “you” to represent the people, she revealed that the citizens imitate what they see their leaders do. Iba’s keen desire for such political course reflects her disaffiliation with corruption.

Her revelation that she “felt stronger ties” with Yoruba culture after the 8weeks program reflects her language identity change from just being strong to “stronger” and the role of the YGPA on her linguistic and cultural growth. This change is seen in her language and appearance as seen in line 28:13 “And my family definitely noticed that with how I was even dressing and I was speaking to them when I got back home.” Her use of the words “definitely noticed” affirms her linguistic and cultural transformation

4.2. Demilade

Demilade’s experience and journey show that it’s possible to live in the United States and not be Americanized. With efforts from one’s family and several ethnic engagements, living home
abroad is very realistic. According to Awokoya’s (2012), Nigerians residing in Texas, when compared with immigrants from other countries residing within the same community, are seen identifying more with Nigerian lifestyles abroad than any other ethnic group, as they display their ethnic ties often in their dressing and clothing. Though Demilade’s family is not from Texas, they, like the Nigerian immigrants there could be described as upholding their ethnic heritage abroad. The depth of their ties to Nigerian values and lifestyles is seen in the background account of Demilade below as she takes me through her world, and we collaboratively produce her personalities in discourse.

Can you tell me about your background and upbringing?

02: 13 I was born and raised in Brooklyn. Before my grandma recently died, she used to live with us and my dad's family is Muslim because he's 02:15 like he's Yoruba. So, his family's Muslim and my mom's family was Christian. So I was exposed to, you know, you know a lot like a huge part of Nigerian culture, while growing up and not just one tribe, so 02:32 when I would go to school and that would bleed into my pronunciation of certain things, people would make fun of me. 02:41 People would make fun of me, like, “oh, why do you do this that way?”- whatever, because I was heavily influenced by my parents, my grandma. And I also went to Nigerian churches, hung out at a Nigerian mosque. 02:59always at the Nigerian parties. So, but, you know, most of my I'm not really too exposed. I wasn't really too exposed to American culture like that so 03:11 go to school. You know, it would be an interesting dichotomy. 03:14Because, you know, have this ain't like you know just learning English and learning how American people act you know being shocked when I would call elders by their first names.03:25And stuff like that. I'm learning not to kneel down to 03:30 you know other people that are not Nigerian. Because, like, you know, they'll find that a bit strange. So, you know, I learned at an earlier age at an early age to 03:41 to really want to turn on and turn off the culture for two places and because I was so proud of my Nigerian heritage. (DEMILADE)

Demilade is also American born. But her family make up differs in terms of ethnicity and religion (Igbo and Yoruba; Christianity and Islam). Her parents and grandma (who can be described to be culturally competent) all played huge roles in Demilade’s linguistic and cultural identities. In line 2:15, her choice of words “was exposed to”; “huge part” depicts her as someone who was very much familiar with and knowledgeable of Nigerian lifestyles before participating in the YGPA
program. Her tense usage shows her prior knowledge and performance while the phrase reveals the measure of her awareness. As seen above, there were moments in her linguistic journey when she experienced linguistic interference between English and Yoruba. In lines 2:32 and 2:41, tense usage like “would” “bleed into” and the noun “pronunciation” reflect her past linguistic identity that is laced with interference in her translanguaging process. Her experience in which she was made fun of in school because of her pronunciation explains her discouraging moment. That Demilade loves her Nigerian heritage made her unashamed of living the lifestyle by switching between Nigerian and American culture even when she was made fun of.

Nigerians generally, especially the Yorubas, cherish the idea of respect. Depending on gender, a person is labelled to be well behaved or respectful when they greet the elderly ones in certain ways. For instance, a young female kneels while a young male postrates. Also, kin titles like brother, sister, aunt or uncle are used to denote respect. Demilade, in lines 3:14 and 3:25 revealed how she did this to show her immersion and performance of the cultural act which non-Nigerians perceived to be “strange”. It can also be seen from this discourse that Demilade loves Yoruba culture dearly. In her testimony, the option to study other languages like Spanish, Arabic and Latin was presented to her while she was in college, but she rather chose to study Yoruba in order to learn more about the Nigerian culture. According to her in line 5:10 “I would rather learn more of my culture than someone else's culture unapologetically.”

Her strong identification with the Nigerian culture shows in the first person possessive pronominal deictic “my” used to show a depth of connection. The fact that she’s “unapologetic’ about her choice further buttresses her stance. Her appreciation for Yoruba culture is seen in her experience with the elderly while on the program. According to her, the older people she came across in Nigeria complained about how she was dressed and regarded her as being mannerless.
and uncultured because she was wearing shorts, which was normal for her here in the United States. Though she felt insulted at that particular point in time, (line 8:15) “I was just so confused. I was just like, I mean, I could wear whatever I want”) she described the whole experience as “interesting” and an opportunity for her to be “completely immersed in the culture.”

Without doubts, Demilade loved this experience as seen in her conversation in line 8:43 where she said: “I liked the new side of Yoruba, I was able to learn”. Although she is seen as one who loves Yoruba culture, she disagrees with some of the cultural practices that are not in line with her religious beliefs. During one of their trips while on the program, she refused to carry out some of the rituals that were expected of them in the palace where they were asked to washed their heads in a particular ‘fountain’ in the palace for spiritual cleansing and blessings. She disagreed with the king and got into an argument with him that such practice is a ‘type of idol worship” in which she would not engage. It is important to note that the king in question is a very powerful king in Yoruba land.

According to Yoruba culture, nobody dares argue with an elderly person let alone the king. It’s believed that the older ones are well experienced and more knowledgeable, hence, whatever instruction they give should be obeyed. Demilade, however, didn’t mind flouting this norm in order to stand for what she believes. Demilade’s disrespectful attitude here underscored the pervasive conflict between religion and culture in modern society. For her, her religion (Christianity) frowns at what it sees to be a diabolical practice. Hence, she upheld her religious belief by rejecting the ritual. Demilade’s love for “intimate gathering” is clearly seen in this interview as she responded to my question on one of her highlight moments on the program. She recalled how Nigerians, regardless of their tribes and ethnicity, are usually united by sports. 15:00 “Watching Nigerians playing the World Cup in Nigeria in a Nigerian restaurant, it was just so fun
like the atmosphere was so vibrant All of us came together, we were eating on you know just enjoy each other's company watching the game.”

Responding to a question on her relationship with her host family, she opened up that she “enjoyed” living in a Nigerian home and she had a healthy relationship with them. She gave instances like going together to the market on Saturdays, and to church on Sundays. She, however, didn’t interact with them a lot because she was “always on the go”. Though she wasn’t forthcoming in giving details of what might be responsible for the degree of the interaction, one could infer that her relationship with her host family and the host community wasn’t smooth or probably she was displeased with certain things. As seen in her response to whether she still keep in touch with her host family, she said “no” and she gave no reason for that. Her response to the impact of the study broad program shows some transformation in her socialization process as she revealed that she learnt to honor people that are older than her apart from her parents. She recalled a scenario in which she was rude to the program coordinator when she was asked to attend the Osun Osogbo festival which she considered to be a form of idol worship. Learning to honor older people also gives her a sense of disagreeing with them respectfully and not in a rude manner. Hence, she stated that I think after being in Nigeria, I really learned honor I'm honoring adults, other than my parents because it's like, it's easy. Like, okay, like, you know, I respect my parents, whatever, whatever all or, you know, just kneel down and greet people in public but like actually just me being with adults and just honoring the adults to have different views than I. So I think I really learned that because I kinda was rude to Omolola while in the program because we didn't see eye to eye with a lot of stuff because he wanted me to go to Osun Oshogbo. And I was like, No, I'm not going. I went to Lagos Even though I shouldn't have. But also, stuff like that. I mean, like, after that, you know, it was very humbling like being able to really just look back and see where I’d grown because I, not only did I learned about Yoruba culture, but I really learned you know just be with a whole bunch of adults for a long time and amicably you know I 19:02 mean like but doing so with respect. (DEMILADE)
Demilade was the only one that identified herself as a Nigerian among other participants who self-identify themselves as Nigerian-American. When asked how she identify herself, she said “I say I am Yoruba and Igbo 26:19 I don't, I mean what I understand that I'm Nigerian American but like I don't know I really consider myself a Nigerian to be quite frank with you. 26:28 but Nigerians don't buy that, but whatever” (line 26:12).

4.3. Sayo

Can you tell me about your background and upbringing?

My name Sayo, I'm 21 years old I just graduated from Cornell University. 01:23 I grew up in several places. I was born in California in the United States. 01:29 My family moved around a lot, moved to Nigeria to London, back to the United States, stay there for a long time, but eventually went back to Nigeria to live in Lagos. 01:39 We live there from the time were about 14, no,11 or 12 years old and stay there until 16 years old. Sayo, like Demilade and Iba, was also an American born. (SAYO)

Though she spent almost four years in Nigeria and experienced Nigerian Secondary school, she wasn’t fully immersed in Nigerian culture. Sayo is also from a bi-tribal family, though her parents are Yoruba and Edo as different from Demilade’s mother who is Igbo. Unlike Iba and Demilade whose parents played huge roles in instilling Yoruba cultures and Nigerian lifestyles in them while growing up, Sayo was self-motivated. She revealed that: “I thought it was important for me to learn the language because even though we had to an extent grown up for several years. 02:52 We never really learned the language. Even though we went to school there and they tried to teach us Yoruba, It just never was” (line 2:36).

Line 2:37 where she said she “thought it was important” for her to learn the language reveals that the motivation wasn’t from anyone but herself. In line 2:52, she used the deictic first person plural pronoun “we” to mean that she and her siblings didn’t learn Yoruba language although their mid secondary school teachers (“they”, that is third person plural) in Nigeria made an effort to teach them. She describes the teachers’ effort as unsuccessful. Describing herself, she
believes she’s a “gentle person” who likes peace and doesn’t want to get into any trouble. Although she used to believe herself to be patient, she revealed that the program “really developed” her patience as seen in the story she told of her experience during one of their trips to the palace where she and other students had to wait for three hours before seeing the king. She said: “I remember we had to wait we went. We went to a palace to see a king. I waited about six or seven hours. And I was just like, I was like, you know, I took a plane. Just be patient. It really showed me just how patient I could really be” (line 05:08).

When describing her relationship with her host family, she recalled that they contributed to her Yoruba language learning as she said in line 11:52 that “they were available for me when I did decide to practice.” In terms of ethnic and national identification, Sayo represents herself in different ways: as a Nigerian, a Yoruba, as a Nigerian-American, as a non-Black and as a non-American. Her self-representation as a Nigerian is displayed when she was asked about her perception of Nigeria and the U.S. She used the words “American people” and “especially the black in America” in line 19:31 to express her believe that the Americans (both white and black) are not as “empowered” as Nigerians. Sayo’s self-representation as a Yoruba is also seen when she was revealing the influence of the program on her. “I’m so grateful. because I can say that I saw my culture to almost the fullest extent” (line 22:08). ‘My culture” in the above line shows her identification with Yoruba culture and part of her ethnicity. Her response to the question she was asked on how she self identifies herself shows that she sees herself as a Nigerian American because she has “a foot firmly planted on both cultures’ and she is “extremely familiar” (line 23:32) with both Nigerian and American culture.

4.4. Imo

Can you tell me about your background and upbringing?
I was originally born in Seattle, Washington for my both my parents came from Nigeria. Or on the same place. So, they both emigrated here. The year before I was born. Um, yeah. So, I was raised in Seattle. But then I went to school in DC. And I went to school to study my bachelor's in African American Studies and so I always wanted to like, you know, traveling to all that. My parents spoke different languages. So they never really spoke any of languages to us. They mainly spoke English so I'm not native in any African language and I really hated that. Because I love learning about everything Africa specifically Nigeria, because that's where I'm from.

Imo happens to be an American born who does not have Yoruba parents. Though both of her parents are Nigerians, she disclosed that she and her siblings have no knowledge of any African languages because her “parents spoke different languages” and they never spoke their languages to them. From Imo’s statement above about her parents not speaking any of the African languages to her at home, one can infer that her linguistic and cultural unawareness of African languages can be attributed to inadequate family support. The significance of family support as a foundational agent of linguistic knowledge and cultural awareness cannot be overemphasized. Another thing about Imo is that the YGPA program gave her the opportunity to visit Nigeria for the first time. when responding to the question about her upbringing she said: “the first time I ever went to Africa was Ghana. That was my first trip and then Nigeria, you know, I was in the Yoruba GPA program”.

She can be described as someone whose love for Africa and Nigerian culture made her study African studies and Yoruba language in college. Imo is self-motivated and determined to learn about Africa in general and Nigeria specifically. Because she was determined to learn the language, she was not happy while on the program because her learning pace was slow. She shows the depth of her determination when she made the following statement: “but I really wanted to leave fluent like. I just was in love with Yoruba. And I just wanted to leave Nigeria like a lot better than how I come and so I was stressing myself out with that so much”.
on while they (YGPA participants) were on the program in which the vehicle they were on caught fire, she disclosed that some of the participants made a scene out of it in a disrespectful manner. While she saw what happened as a normal life experience, others perceived it as something strange because the incidents happened in Nigeria. She recalled thus:

07:40 This is another part. My cohort I went with, there were like two groups, kind of like 07:47 There was a group, though I found to be a little bit more disrespectful. And then there was the group, I wasn't. And so they were kind of making a scene about it. Oh, like we come here we paid the program, Baba, Baba, blah.” (IMO)

Using the term “group”, she dissociated herself with the members of the rude group by identifying with the other group which she believes wasn’t rude, thereby revealing that the group she belonged to wasn’t disrespectful. Imo recorded some growth by traveling to Nigeria. Saying that she “didn't really feel complete” (line 27:25) before experiencing Nigeria shows how she was able to find a connection and develop a strong bond with Nigeria and Yoruba culture after participating in the program. This feeling of completion reflects some sense of positivity and cultural connection. Responding to a question about one of the things that stood out for her on the program, she reflected on her experience at the king’s palace where there was an Osun celebration and other traditional practices, which she saw in its authentic form.

Imo appreciated the fact that African tradition hasn’t been tampered with in this modern world of globalization. Her statement “32:28 and to see that in Nigeria was something that stuck with me” buttresses the point made earlier on about her cultural connection. The strong ties she has for Nigeria are also revealed in her response to the question she was asked on how she identifies herself. For Imo,

Stronger Nigerian accent I would just say I identify Nigerian but I think people look at me if I didn’t add American into it. So I do identify myself as Nigerian American only because I was born here, and that's it. Um, but I've definitely side more my Nigeran side than anything American I think the only reason I'm American, honestly, because I was born here, and that is it (IMO). (line 33.05)
As also seen in her discourse, she self identifies with Yoruba culture though her parents are not Yoruba. She said: “even though my parents aren't Yoruba, necessarily. I really felt like identified with Yoruba culture”. (line 02:13) This statement shows her strong ties with the culture.

4.5. Ayo

Ayo was the only participant born in Nigeria whose both parents are Yoruba. Moving to the United States at the age of six, her parents made efforts to continue to instill Yoruba culture in her and her siblings. Her parents ensured they retain the language and culture by speaking Yoruba to her and her twin sister, taking them to different Yoruba events and getting them acquainted with different Yoruba foods. Her twin sister was her support system who helped her in “retaining” the knowledge because they used the language together here in the United States before she passed away. Apart from her twin sister, her older siblings helped in instilling memories and other cultural practices in them. Despite having this family support, Ayo’s knowledge of the language is limited.

Speaking on her language journey in reply to the question:

Can you tell me about your background and upbringing? she says:

02:43 Honestly, I would say that when I started University.02:52 Was when my knowledge and my passion for my culture and just Yoruba in general, even quadrupled. I can't even say double, but it quadruples and just 03:04 You know grew exponentially and I was able to start taking Yoruba classes. So before, before that I already spoke Yoruba 03:12 Somewhat at home and I, of course, understood it whenever it would be spoken to me, but I didn't know how to write it. I didn't know how to read it or anything like that. 03:22 I didn't have like that accelerated advanced skill. (AYO)

Apart from her family support, Ayo was self-motivated to learn Yoruba culture because she loves it but the knowledge she got from her family wasn’t enough to make her a fluent speaker, reader and writer. Her use of the word “somewhat” (line 03:12) sheds light on her spoken level. Her use of “somewhat” here shows that she still needed help with the language though she could understand it. The fact that she “didn’t know” (line 03:12) how to read and write reveals her
proficiency level. In line 00:21, her use of the phrase “accelerated advanced skill” reveals her as one whose competence in Yoruba language is not very highly developed.

While in school as an undergraduate and a graduate student, Ayo took Yoruba language for six years. The years she devoted to learning the language shows her passion for the language and her determination to progress.

00:04:44 Like my Yoruba skill just accelerated, it advanced from what I started back in 2012 to where I am currently. 00:05:06 With my skill and everywhere I go now I'm always very proud and very honored to let people know about my Yoruba skills to 00:05:15 even speak Yoruba with people. I even now I'm at the point where I teach Yoruba to other students like myself, who are here. (AYO)

Without doubts, Ayo recorded progress as seen in her testimony above. She was able to demonstrate a huge successful difference between when she started (that is, the time indicated by her use of the past temporal deictic her “then”) and her present linguistic level. Ayo, who wasn’t confident speaking, reading and writing Yoruba now has become a teacher. She metamorphosed from being a learner to a teacher as seen in line 05:15 above. Ayo is a perfectionist who gives her best to achieve her goals. Ayo has this to say about herself:

08:41 whatever I signed up for whatever I embark on I'm always sure to, you know, execute those things effectively and 09:01 I'm very particular about the types of things that I partake in as far as my time is concerned, but once I do dedicate my time to something I make sure that I don't just bring in 20% or 40%, I bring in, you know, my best work. (AYO)

The phrases “make sure” and “blink in my best work” in the above line shows Ayo to be hardworking, determined, diligent and success oriented. She attributed these personality traits to her parents whom she described to be very disciplined and diligent in whatever they do. While describing the greatest challenge she had on the program, Ayo, like Imo, self-represents herself as belonging to a respectful group. Using the dietic “those”, “they” and “them” for the students who were regarded as being rude and disrespectful, she dissociated herself from such people, thus,
projecting herself as one who is respectful. Ayo’s self-dissociation from the rude students can be seen in the following lines:

00:27:05 we would be in the bus with those with those some other students and 00:27:15 We just never knew what to expect. So, I think that was kind of unpleasant for me because sometimes you just you just never knew what they would, they would bring up with some of them, like, in all honesty, were kind of disrespectful. 00:27:29They were even disrespectful to Dr. Omolola himself, and they were even disrespectful to themselves. (AYO)

Identifying herself as belonging to a respectful group, Ayo uses the dietic: “we” and “our” as seen below:

27:50 but I feel like our group, our sets.00:28:00We were kind of divided into two, there were like a set of students who, you know, those ones, they were just there to do whatever they wanted to do, then there was another set of students who we were, you know, 00:28:13We kind of bonded together. We stayed together and like you know we did our thing. (AYO)

Ayo also believes in upholding Yoruba culture in its most authentic form. She puts forward a clarion call to every Nigerian and lover of Yoruba culture to strive and not allow western influence to infiltrate the culture. Using the first person plural dietic “we”, (line 00:28) she refers to both Nigerians in the diaspora and Nigerians in Nigeria to ensure that the culture is preserved in its most authentic form. Through this gesture, Ayo can be referred to as a cultural conservationist.

Ayo is an activist who embraces the celebration of human differences and cultural diversities. Making this feature of hers known when responding to the question she was asked about her perception of Nigeria, she expressed great displeasure in Nigerians’ agitation for separation. She believes that with unity Nigerians can confront the challenges facing the country. For her, there will always be division even within the same ethnicity. Hence, “separation” is not the solution to Nigeria’s problem. “Why do we want to continue to further divide ourselves, why
do we want to continue to further separate ourselves if anything 00:48:33 We need to unite and rid those bad eggs in the basket” (AYO). (line 00:48:23)

Using the first-person plural pronoun “we” she grouped herself with all Nigerians and call for a common purpose of unity with the goal of tackling western influence which she dissociated herself from using the third person distal plural deictic determiner “those”.

Ayo’s flexible and adaptive personality is seen in the story she told of her stay in Nigeria where she had to use a mosquito net which she wasn’t used to in the United States. Inconveniences like the bathroom system in which she had to boil water in order to get warm water to shower and other infrastructural issues she was faced with could have made her very angry and uncomfortable. “The whole time I was in Nigeria. There was no such thing as like taking a warm bath” (line 02:14). But Ayo believes although those infrastructures were luxuries she enjoyed in the United States before going to Nigeria, the fact that many Nigerians live with such inadequacy as their social reality made her to “consciously” cope with the situation. She found this experience interesting after the program when she saw showering with cold water for sixty days as a challenge Americans gave themselves on You tube. She, therefore, becomes more appreciative of the luxury she’s privileged to enjoy in the United States. With this reference, the irony of life’s experience is displayed in the fact that some people’s lack is other people’s luxury and privilege.

Several instances show Ayo’s self-representation in terms of nationality and ethnicity. When advocating unity in Nigeria and Africa, she used the first-person pronouns “my” “we”, “our”, “us” to position herself as a Yoruba, Nigerian and African respectively. An example is seen below: “if we love this aspect of our culture. We need to be able to uphold it in the most raw forms possible” (line 39:08). Ayo’s self-positioning is also seen in her response to the question on what she identified herself as where she strongly asserts that she is Yoruba and Nigerian American.
01:01:01 I'm a Nigerian American, I'm Nigerian, I'm Yoruba. I feel like I'm all of them, you know, it's very much 01:01:09 I'm one over the other and in all honesty I cannot say I'm Nigerian because I'm also American and I was raised here and the American culture is 01:01:21 very influential in who I am. But at the same time. 01:01:26 I can't isolate one over the other. You know, I can't say I'm American, because that's not completely true. Neither can I say I'm Nigerian because that's not completely true at the same time. So I'm Nigerian American and my 01:01:41 my ethnicity happens to be Yoruba. (AYO)

Ayo is very much aware of herself. She acknowledged her ethnic representation, cultural affiliation, and linguistic influence of both Nigerian and American culture on her.

The notion that identity is fluid, complex, and multifaceted can’t be overemphasized. All the participants demonstrated the fluidity and dynamic features of identity as seen in their personal and linguistic development. For instance, Ayo who was the youngest child in her birth family carried out a new social role as an elder sibling to her host sibling. Demilade, who at first could only understand Yoruba, became an active user and speaker. Participants’ testimonies of their personal growth in terms of learning to be polite, being adaptive and flexible, learning to be more patient, and learning to be more appreciative of their culture are also affirmative. It is important to note, however, that identity can also be fixed in some instance as demonstrated by Demilade whose perception of herself as a Nigerian before and after the program didn’t change. While it’s possible for people to decide their individual identity, other people can also determine one’s identity depending on location, situation, and performance. Drawing from the narratives of these participants, for instance, they all make their perceptions about their ethnic and national identities known. One participant, Iba, made her decision about her ethnic identity clear when she revealed that she regarded herself as a Nigerian. Saying that she didn’t care that Nigerians don’t see her a Nigerian bolsters her identity decision. Also, that Nigerians don’t see Nigerian Americans as Nigerians upholds the fact that Nigerians decide Nigerian Americans’ identities.
CHAPTER 5. LANGUAGE USE AND PARTICIPANT’S RELATIONSHIP

5.1. Introduction

In the previous chapter, the dynamic nature of identities was brought to bear as participants narrated their study abroad experiences to reproduce their connections with others in the past and at present through their language use. From their narration and the analysis of their language use, one can see how they produced their identities. Moreover, as these participants told their stories, they drew on memories by engaging in self-reflections that show their relationships with others in the social world. This relationship is seen in how they organized narrated events in such a way that the stories of others are told within their stories. Ultimately, these stories help one to further understand participants’ self-identifications. The stories of other participants told are the core of this chapter. For proper framing, these “others” are among the study abroad program (YGPA), language instructors, Nigeria as an institution, Nigerians in Nigeria, and the host families.

5.2. Study Abroad/YGPA

The influence of the YGPA program on participants can’t be overemphasized. To ascertain the relevance of the program to the participants, determining the extent of the impact the program had on these participants becomes necessary. While drawing on memories to narrate the impact the program had on them, all five participants revealed that the immersive nature of program gave them further insights on the culture and the Yoruba language. They all identify the program as having been very effective in the growth of their linguistic and cultural knowledge. Apart from this general impact, participants recorded distinct aspects of growth and development that are particular to their personal socialization process. In their accounts of the influence the YGPA had
on them, participants recalled episodic events that featured, themselves, their host families, the other participants, and their language instructors. Participants’ testimonies are highlighted below:

09:05 It was just amazing to see how in eight weeks. Like, I completely transformed and stuff that even I wasn't even learning at school because I had to follow the pace of like my other classmates as well. And they weren't there yet. So I couldn't necessarily jump ahead. But with this YGPA it really allowed me to be entrepreneurial within my learnings and taking the extra step to understand different things, different aspects about Yoruba culture. (IBA)

Here Iba’s use of the words “eight weeks”, “completely transformed” and “entrepreneurial” allows one to see her participation in the program as an institution that enhanced her personal development despite the relatively short time duration. In eight weeks, as Iba mentioned, she was able to devise means of learning the language skillfully. Her testimony acknowledges the YGPA program as being responsible for such transformation.

23:36 the program really influenced me to take my culture so much more seriously because I, I mean, I still did I still was, you know, very serious about being Yoruba and Igbo and all of that stuff, but just seeing like seeing people just I mean. So, for obviously I know because they live in Nigeria, but seeing people like just so fluently speak it that really influenced me to do better with the language. (DEMILADE)

For Demilade, the program helped her as a learner to be more intentional in knowing the Yoruba language and culture. The words “really influenced” used in (line 23:30) shows the program as an effective agent which made this shift possible. Though she took the culture seriously in the past, the program opened her eyes to more reasons why she should “do better”. She also identified being around native speakers as a huge contributing factor. For her, the program made it possible for her to come in contact with native speakers whose fluency further inspired her determination to be a better speaker and user of the language. Demilade’s account reflects a difference between before the program and after. She showed that through the program her past interest in the culture and language was less strong from her present interest in which she is determined to continue with even in the future.
21:14 I feel like the influence of the program is probably going to be throughout my life. 21:20 In in multiple ways. I think that a big way is 21:25This a sense that yeah I had the opportunity to see my culture to the best extent than I guess a lot of people ever get the best extent that I think that is just a such a unique opportunity that looking back, I'm so grateful. I am able to have because I can say that I saw my culture to almost the fullest extent and it's grounding and humbling. (SAYO)

Sayo also identified the program as an influential institution, for her, a platform for cultural insight and instilling social values. Sayo’s statement in line 21:25 that she is grateful looking back shows the progressive influence of the program on her even after two years. This revelation highlighted the connection between Sayo’s present and the future. As at the time of this interview, she still felt the impact of the program. One is able to see the extent to which the program serves as a longlasting socialization process in line 21:14 where she stated that the influence of the program “is probably going to be throughout” her life.

27:42 Oh, it always feels everything I did, and even in that it was something missing. You know, again, you can read all the stuff you want you can learn, you know, from professors, all you want, but it's theory. So, going to Nigeria.28:02For the first time, I think.28:08 It finally completed that theory and it help me to figure out how I wanted to put that into practice, like how I wanted what I wanted to learn. And what I wanted to master so 28:21Put that in that practice together, you know, and it just made me feel more connected. (IMO)

To Imo, the program helped her to feel more connected to her African heritage. Distinguishing between her past and her present, she revealed how the program made her feel complete. Before participating in the program, Imo’s understanding and knowledge of Nigerian language and culture were vague. For instance, seeing her parents and other Africans she encountered act the way they did looked strange to her. Having participated in the program, her understanding of cultural diversities came to bear. Hence, she identified the program an institution for cultural practice and connection.

00:52:23Um, so I think adaptability and overall just being flexible to my environment, you know, is something that I learned. I remember, you know, we had to sleep under mosquito nets. I don't sleep under mosquito nets over here. I've never used it. I've never even seen a mosquito net, but that was the situation. I was, I was at when I was
Nigeria. So, though, there wasn’t much I could do if unless I just wanted to get bit by mosquitoes and maybe risk getting malaria. (AYO)

Ayo sees the program as having been an agent for character building. Using an African cultural symbol, “mosquito net”, she made known the impact of the program on her. This experience reflects the privilege she enjoyed in the past in the U.S. and the challenge she had to face when in Nigeria. Because the program presented this hurdle which she had no choice but to embrace, the aftermath of this experience continued with her even until the present, and possibly, into the future.

Although all the five participants described the program as a success and would love to participate in the program repeatedly, Sayo identified some lapses which she felt were responsible for some students’ misbehavior. According to her, all the students were motivated to learn the language and participate in the program, but the program needs some structural adjustments in the future.

08:26 The people in charge like step on the toes of students. I don't know how to explain that. In addition, the teaching, the way that we were taught and as much as the immersive experiences were the most useful part of learning the language, the way the language could have been taught, could have been a lot better.08:46 Luckily, like I said, I've been able to learn, Yoruba very well in my university because my teacher really did a great job but 08:54 For a lot of the students they hadn't had that, and then the way that the language itself was taught wasn't the most helpful. 09:03 to help them learn. So, there's a lot of frustration in that sense. (SAYO)

The statement above was in response to the question on whether all the participants were motivated enough to participate in the program considering their various misbehaviors during the program. While Ayo was of the opinion that some students weren’t motivated enough because they saw the program as an avenue for vacation, Sayo believed the YGPA instructors need some pedagogical adjustment. In line 8:46, she compared her Yoruba language instructors here in the United States to the instructors in Nigeria. For her, the former were instrumental to her sound learning.
5.3. Nigeria

When the five participants were asked their perception about Nigeria, the following were some of their responses:

17:37 I love Nigeria so much like no one I cannot dispute that with myself. I love Nigeria. I love the country. I love my culture with that. I know that there are certain 17:54 challenges that Nigeria on a very high level faces corruption being like the utmost challenge. 18:01And you can really truly see how that trickles down into the common people of Nigeria and literally how it affects their everyday lives like just structure wise and it’s crazy. (DEMILADE)

15:02 I just love the relationships between people, so wholesome and loving. I think that Nigeria could be the best place in the world. If only we had like more infrastructure more opportunities for people. I think that if some things had been done by the wealthiest properly to like build more roads to other people, then it will be the happiest place in the world. (SAYO)

25:15I just think about colonization and I think about all this stuff that set Nigeria backwards. But I will tell you. 25:23Taking a bucket shower in the morning was not something I looked forward to. (IMO)

00:34:30A place like Nigeria and I think, you know, having the opportunity to see firsthand on my own that Nigeria is developing. Nigeria has the potential to develop right but I got to see myself that there are some 00:34:48 key factors that are standing in the way of the development of Nigeria, there are some key factors that are standing in the way of the advancement of, you know, 00:35:01 of Nigeria and I think that these key factors include things that are very that are political and a lot of people don't like to talk about it, but they also include you know Eurocentric influences. (AYO)

All the five participants expressed their love for Nigeria, its culture and the people. They identify themselves with the pattern of living that exists between and among the people. According to them, the communal living and the hospitality they enjoyed from their hosts was very encouraging. They described Nigeria as having rich cultural practices (as found in its food, dress, religion, and traditions). Although the country is blessed with human and social capital, the participants were unhappy with and discouraged by its lack of development. In their eight weeks’ stay in the country, they experienced the lived experiences of an average Nigerian.
Lived experiences here means socio-cultural and economic realities such as poor power supply, high cost of living, poor internet, and bad roads. Explaining the factors that might be responsible for the country’s backwardness, participants gave varying opinions. Demilade identifies “corruption” as the major cause of Nigeria problem. By implication, this means that the leadership of the country is responsible for Nigeria’s problems. From her observation, because the leaders are corrupt, the citizens also engage themselves in illicit acts. Revealing how these acts played out while she was on the program, she said: “I’m not going to point any fingers or point blame anyone, but funds were definitely mismanaged in terms of the program even giving like the host family.” (Line 20:23; DEMILADE)

For Sayo, the problem of Nigeria could be solved by the wealthy class. Using the conditional conjunction “if” (line 15:15), she stated that inadequate social infrastructure is responsible for Nigeria’s problem. That the availability of infrastructure like good roads would make Nigeria the happiest place in the world implies that the country is a happy place to a large extent. The responsibilities of attaining this higher height of happiness is therefore placed in the hands of the privileged in the country, thereby viewing them as social agents that can make the development of the country a reality.

Imo’s perception of Nigeria was the problem of colonization. Ever since Nigeria gained her independence in the year 1960, the state of the country continues to be worrisome. While some people believe the western world shouldn’t be blamed any longer because the country is sovereign, other people are of the opinion that colonization was the bedrock that continues to set the country back. Imo belongs to this school of thought as she cited an example of the bathroom system. She revealed that she never looked forward to having her bath in the morning during her stay in Nigeria due to the structure of the bathroom as seen in her comment below:
25:15 I just think about colonization and I think about all this stuff that set Nigeria backwards. But I will tell you. 25:23 Taking a bucket shower in the morning was not something I looked forward to 25:29 The bathroom systems are not something I looked forward to like it was 25:34 it was trivial things like that. It wasn’t something so overarching then I would be like, is this something that is this a place I would go back to is this a place I would recommend like it was trivial stuff like that that. 25:49 I don’t even feel like I can blame on Nigeria, you know, 25:56 A shower was the first thing. (IMO)

It’s interesting to see how Imo in line 25:49 above stated that she wouldn’t blame the bathroom system on Nigeria. One can therefore infer that she identified colonization as the major cause of such bathroom structure.

Ayo also agreed with Imo by stating that Eurocentric influence and political factors are responsible for lack of development in the country. While Imo’s position was colonization, Ayo believed the factor is beyond colonization. By Eurocentric influence, one can begin to talk about forms of new colonization that hold the socio-political/economic space of the country at ransom. Hence, Ayo positioned western influence as one of the key factors affecting Nigeria’s development. Another agent Ayo identified was politics. By politics here, one begins to talk about the leadership of the country. For Ayo, therefore, external and internal factors make Nigeria an underdeveloped country.

5.4. Nigerians in Nigeria

The general impression participants have of Nigerians when describing their experiences with them during the program is that Nigerians are loving, respectful and hospitable. Regardless of age difference and ethnicity, they show respect to everyone. In terms of the friendly and hospitable nature of Nigerians, Demilade revealed the following.

14:49 Interesting enough, I was in Nigeria, the World Cup was happening, and Nigeria was playing. So it was such an amazing experience. Oh my gosh. 15:00 Watching Nigerians on playing the World Cup in Nigeria in a Nigerian restaurant, it was just so fun like the atmosphere was so vibrant. 15:11 All of us came together, we were eating, and you know, just enjoy each other’s company watching the game. Everybody's heart rate was going up like it was amazing. (DEMILADE)
Nigeria is both multilingual and multiethnic. With about 450 documented languages and 250 ethnic groups, the country is blessed with multiple linguistic varieties and rich cultural practices. Also, Nigeria’s population is over 170 million. With this diversity, there is bound to be some disunity and ethnic division. Often, the political leaders intentionally create inter-ethnic division to achieve their selfish political interest. Over the years, however, sporting activities have been an avenue for togetherness regardless of ethnicities. Demilade observed this mischievous ploy during her stay in Nigeria as seen in the account she gave above in which participating in watching together the “world cup” united the people for a common goal and desire for the country’s success. Here, “World Cup” becomes a symbolic agent that unites Nigerians.

Some of the participants, however, conveyed their disappointment that many Nigerians’ socio-political behavior is heavily influenced by western factors. According to Iba, many Nigerians show preference for speaking western languages rather than Nigerian languages. While she was in Nigeria, she recalled how Nigerians she encountered were curious to know about life in America. In fact, while she was supposed to be in the host community immersing herself in the language and culture by speaking and practicing, she became an English accent teacher as seen in line 06:59: “I will also be speaking English to my host family like teaching them how to speak in an American accent. And then I would also just be like, Yeah, I still want to learn Yoruba well, it will be helpful to just speak Yoruba a lot.” (IBA)

In line 33:44 below, one can see how Iba dissociated herself from such linguistic behavior. Hence, Iba’s evaluation below:

33:44 You have your own language and you are literally just rattled with this perception of a Western language you're obsessed with the Western world. 33:55 Which a lot of Nigerians are. I'm not going to lie when I was there, everyone wanted to know about how life was in America and stuff like that, which 34:03 To be honest, I don't know why people glamorize it so much. It's not. I would rather even be living in Nigeria than live over here. (IBA)
While Iba’s reaction above was concerning the linguistic behavior of many Nigerians, Ayo’s disappointment was regarding many Nigerians’ political behavior. She described them below as being passive because they are relaxed in not challenging the status quo. For her, many Nigerians accept whatever the leaders are doing without questioning or reacting against it as seen in line 51:31 below. “Another issue that I had learned with Nigerians living in Nigeria, many of Nigerians in Nigeria are very complacent. They’re just like, oh, like this is the situation. “So what can we do, like”. (AYO)

In the above lines, Ayo’s use of the phrase “Nigerians living in Nigeria” shows difference between the political behavior of Nigerians abroad and the ones living in Nigeria. For her, Nigerians living abroad challenge aberrant political acts. Ayo’s use of the third person plural deictic pronoun “they” in reference to Nigerians in Nigeria the above line also reflects her non-conformity with the complacent attitude of many Nigerians.

Interestingly, Ayo’s expression in the lines below depicts her association and self-identification as a Nigerian youth. As seen below, she used the deictic first person plural pronouns “we” and “ourselves” to portray herself as a Nigerian youth while she used the distancing words “some” and “many of them” (them- third person plural objective case) to show that she doesn’t belong to the fraction of Nigerian youth with complacent political behavior. She said:

29:21 It's so sad that Nigerians even some Nigerian youth are still thinking that we have to limit ourselves to 29:28 either of these two people, many of them were saying, Oh, Sowore [Sowore is a youth and an independent political aspirant challenging the poor leadership status of the country] doesn't have the experience. (AYO)

“Either of these two people” in line 29: 28 above refers to the older generations of politicians who have been leading the country without achieving any reasonable development. While many Nigerians still hold the believe that they should be allowed to continue to govern because politics deals with experience, Ayo believes such thinking should be discouraged because,
even with the experience, of this generation hasn’t produced any result. The above positioning thus
depicts the older generation as politically ineffective.

5.5. Host Families

The host families are important in a study abroad program as they give participants the
opportunity to have firsthand knowledge on how native Nigerians live in their various homes. In
addition to this knowledge, participants also have the privilege to immerse themselves in the
language and culture of native speakers in their homes. During the participants’ stay in Nigeria,
each of them stayed with different host families. Four of the participants expressed their love for
their host parents as they show them as not agents of linguistic and cultural transmission but agents
of care and help.

11:07 Yeah, I love my host family. I thought that they're the sweetest! 11:13 They took care
of me in the best way they could, there was a bit of a few hiccups with like food because
my both my parents worked 11:21 so I had to fend for myself sometimes. And luckily the
program gave us money to buy some foods. I just, like, go get breakfast at the dining hall
and be able to come back and then like eat something. (SAYO)

Narrating their experience, other participants have the following to say:

14:25 They are very supportive people and even to this day. I'm very close with them. My
host sister, the eldest one just got married. So, I attend her zoom wedding. 14:33 So we're
still very close. And then her husband as well. He's the one that helped me like set up my
bank account. When I was in Nigeria, so very lovely people. And I'm glad to have met
them. I'm glad that I still have a relationship with them as well. (IBA)

Iba projects the host family as an institution for building long lasting social relationships.

As at the time of this interview, after two years in which she participated in the program, her host
family still keeps in touch with her. Her saying “this day” in line 14:25 above reflects her present
relationship with her host family. The family made this possible by supporting and being of help
her. To show how she valued her relationship with the family, she stated that she attended her host

56
sister’s “zoom wedding”. Her use of the temporal “still” buttresses her present relationship with her host family. “they really did everything in their power to make me feel comfortable and 11:07 I really thank them for that stuff.” (IMO: line 10:56)

I’m very thankful for the host family that I had they too were willing to work with me. 00:53:07They too were willing to make things very comfortable for me. They knew things were different for me. They but they were, and I saw that they were trying their best.00:53:17You know, I saw that, like for instance with the power supply. Always going out sometimes when I needed to charge my phone, even though it wasn't time for them to turn on the generator00:11:24This program. I loved it so much because I, even I honestly felt like I was 00:11:29 just extremely blessed and privileged to be placed with the host family that I got my host family. They're like, my family, til this day I even spoke to my Host mom for like two hours on Saturday. (AYO)

Both Ayo and Imo show their host families as social agents of care and moral support. Also, the host families were aware of the students’ cross-cultural plights and related with them in an understanding manner. The fact that the host families “were willing” to work with the participants illustrates the readiness of the families in helping participants to achieve their study abroad goal. Lines 11:24-29 above showed the influential nature of the host families on the program participants. Through the host families’ positive behavior, Ayo felt she had no choice but to love the program. Reflecting her relationship with the host families as at this moment of the interview, one can see a shift from “host family” to an extended family as seen in line 11:29 where Ayo used the phrase, “they are like my family”. The phrases “till this day” and “spoke to my host mom for two hours” emphasize Ayo’s smooth relationship and a sign of closeness with the family at the moment of the interview, which was over two years after participating in the program.

5.6. United States

Some participants stated that eight weeks was enough for them to form their opinion about Nigeria. Although they have lived in the United States all their lives and they have been exposed to its social realities, their exposure to Yoruba culture and Nigeria in eight weeks, coupled with
their ancestral connection with the country, makes them see Nigeria as a beautiful space. Despite the challenges they faced in terms of lack of basic necessities in Nigeria, these participants’ chose to embrace cultural practices they experienced in Nigeria despite the social infrastructure they have experienced over the years enjoyed in the States. Below are responses from two participants that are worthy of note:

Can you tell me about your perception of Nigeria and America?

22:30 I personally think that Nigeria is more beautiful than America, um, because without all of these landscapes and all these crazy things like we still have a very 22:41 beautiful country. And we see the people already kind of spoke about before, when I talk about culture on so yeah. (DEMILADE)

23:21 But we learn the names for, you know, when you're a greeting an older person and you, kneel, or you prostrate we learned how the names for that was like the first thing we did and like this idea of respect and respect for elders and, you know, for people who came before you 23:37 I just think it's missing in American culture and going there. I mean, it's already something I'm familiar with in my own home. But I think being submerged in an experience where everyone is on the same page with that. (IMO)

Undoubtedly, the U.S. is a country of opportunity where many dreams come true. For many immigrants, the country gives them the privilege to enjoy the good things of life they lack in their home country. In fact, many of these immigrants, having lived the U.S. lifestyle for many years, make the U.S. their home and either bid their home country farewell or make it a place for vacation. The U.S., therefore, becomes a social institution of citizenship transformation for many Nigerian immigrants. The participants in the YGPA also reckon with this phenomenon. They presented the U.S. as both a place of privilege and a home. Responding to question about their lived experience in the U.S. in comparison with their eight weeks stay in Nigeria, respondents did not deny this fact about U.S. The following were some of their responses:

15:32 Took me a while to just adjust. You know how I was living the things that I was used to back in America versus the things that I needed to get used to being in Nigeria. (IBA)
16:51 What if God makes me to become that wealthy and comfortable and everything. Why not what we're here in America because all of the things that we lack back home is here. 17:05 Like basic things that we take for granted basic things like good roads hospital and your electricity security healthcare, education, you know, but if we have those things. What are we doing here? 17:20 What I mean, and it's very unfortunate that we have the money we have the resources we have the all of these things back home. (AYO)

Iba uses the contrastive “versus” in her expression above to reflect the U.S. as a country where people have access to social infrastructure unlike Nigeria where such is lacking. This truth also plays out in Ayo’s response in line 16:51 where she used the words “wealthy” and “comfortable” to describe life in the U.S. Ayo indicated that people are not privileged with comfort and wealth in Nigeria. It is interesting how she listed these cultural symbols of good roads, hospitals, electricity, and education in line 17:05 and asking a rhetorical question directed at immigrants abroad: “what are we doing here?” This question expresses a cogent point that these privileges are what keep Nigerian Americans in the United States.

5.7. Home

It’s exciting seeing participants express their love for Nigerian languages and culture. Iba, one of the participants, even goes as far as claiming she would prefer to stay in Nigeria than the United States. Out of my own curiosity to know if this feeling was shared by other participants, I sent out a follow up question to that effect, and Ayo’s response stood out.

Would you choose to live in Nigeria or America if given an option to choose one?

13:12 This [the U.S.] is my home, this is why I've lived the longest I've lived here for what 20 years 20 plus years now. 13:19 So, 13:22 This is where all of my family members are. I mean I have like some extended family 13:27 In Nigeria, but my immediate family, like, core family, my parents, my siblings my siblings’ children, their husbands, their wives, all of them are here like this. So, this is my home. 13:41 I went to school. 13:42 This is where I grew up. This is what I know. I mean, I know the Nigerian system, but this is my home. (AYO)

Recalling from Ayo’s response in line 16:51, she referred to Nigeria as “home”. While responding to the above question, it’s interesting how Ayo unapologetically projects her perception of the U.S. as home. Many reasons are seen in her response as a catalyst for her reasoning. First,
Ayo’s lived experience in the U.S. stood out. Having lived in the country for 20 years, and without denying the fact that she enjoyed the social political and economic resources in the country, the U.S., therefore becomes her home. Second, one can see the migration of almost all her families to the United States as another reason for Ayo’s comment. Moreover, line 13:42 sums up as the expressions “I grew up”, “I know” and “but this is my home” using the first-person pronouns and possessive explained how lived experience and knowledge buttress her reasoning.

5.8. Nigerian Americans And Identity Claim: My Reflection

I find a unilateral connection among all the participants in the YGPA who answered my questions: the fact that they all share in the commonality of United States experience; the evidence that they have vague previous experience of Nigeria social realities; their willingness to have a firsthand experience of Yoruba culture and Nigeria as a whole; and their love for Yoruba culture. Their colleges played vital roles in their Yoruba learning experience. The majority of them have support from their families. Their fluency in the language ranges from basic to advanced. Among them all, only one of them can speak the language fluently and can hold a conversation in the language, while others can either understand but can’t speak or can understand but can speak at only the basic level of question and responses.

5.9. Nigerian Americans and National/Ethnic Identity

The interdependence of language and culture can’t be overlooked when dealing with the issue of identity. Though culture permeates our global world which makes the notion of cultural reification problematic, cultural relativity still holds ground. One can therefore talk about the particularities of Yoruba culture. Apart from two participants who had knowledge of these cultural features because both or one of their parents are Yoruba, others based their knowledge on what
they had been told by their parents, relatives and the media. Even those who possess some knowledge of Yoruba culture are not fully immersed in it. Regardless of this feature that characterizes them, they self-identify themselves as Nigerians. Having experienced Nigeria full on for eight weeks, they expressed their satisfactions and connections with the country and Yoruba culture: the food, the dress, the customs and traditions, the people, and the nation at large. One part of their self-identification is their self-definitions as Nigerian Americans.

I was at first taken aback hearing their nationality claim, especially that of Demilade, who regards herself as a Nigerian. Having reviewed some literature on Nigerian Americans (Emeka 2019; Imoagene 2017; Balogun 2011; Strübel 2012; Awokoya 2012), I discovered that many Nigerian immigrants’ children self-identify themselves as either Americans, or African Americans for several reasons which I perceive valid. Emeka (2019) for instance, reveals that some Nigerian Americans cease to identify themselves as Nigerians because they have been enculturated into the U.S. way of life. According to him, most parents of Nigerian Americans who do this are uneducated and have low-socio economic status. On the other hand, Nigerian Americans who still claim to be Nigerians are in search of their ancestral connections and most of their parents are highly accomplished. Studying 1.5- and second-generation Nigerian Americans, rather, Balogun’s findings reveal that though economic and educational mobility might be a factor, they are not the primary basis for ethnic representation of second-generation Nigerian Americans, but “cultural mobility” is the major factor (Balogun 2011). Cultural mobility here means the cultural space avails this second generation the will power to freely choose and claim any culture to which they identify.

From the participants of this study’s narratives, citizenship, cultural and linguistic knowledge, and their search for ancestral connections play huge roles in their self-identification
and nationalities. For instance, Imo wanted to find more connection with her heritage. She found most of her mother’s behavior strange because she couldn’t find many people here in the U.S with similar attitude. Being in Nigeria and seeing many behavioral patterns similar to her mother’s, she was able to connect the ancestral dots. It’s interesting to see how their various identities come to play. Sayo identifies herself as a Nigerian American because she believes she has her “foot firmly planted on both cultures” and she’s familiar with both cultures. For Demilade, she will only identify herself as an American because it’s her place of birth. Ayo’s perception goes beyond this as she represents herself as a Nigerian American because of how she’s fully immersed in both cultures. Revealing how fully immersed in both cultures she is, Ayo mentioned during the interview that she is not only fluent in the Yoruba language but she also teaches it to other Nigerian Americans who are willing to learn the language. In addition, she strives daily to transmit the culture to her nephews and nieces here in the U.S. She sees herself as an agent of cultural and linguistic transmission.

From their various submissions, participants’ self-belonging is brought to bear. I agree with Bucholtz (2010) that the notion of identity transcends sameness as it’s all encompassing in terms of “sameness” (that is, individual possession of shared features that brings about affiliation with others) and “differences” (that is dissimilar features that result in disaffiliation). But I also agree with Brubaker & Cooper (2000) and Burke and Stets (2009), that other people have a role in determining our identity. It is in line with this perspective that I reflect on Demilade’s report. According to Demilade, despite being abroad, she grew up living the Nigerian lifestyle, even to the extent that her U.S. accent in English is influenced as she had to learn to switch between two languages. Her narrative reveals the influence of language and experience in one’s identity development. Demilade considers herself a pure Nigerian unlike the others who regard themselves as Nigerian
American. Because she lives a Nigerian lifestyle here in the US and her socio-cultural engagement has purely been about everything Nigerian- Yoruba parties, attending a Yoruba or Nigerian mosque, going to a Nigerian church when she became a Christian convert. She is not in doubt of where she belongs.

I would go to school and that would bleed into my pronunciation of certain things, people would make fun of me. Um, People would make fun of me, like, oh, what do you do this. That way, whatever, whatever, because I was heavily influenced by my parents, my grandma. And I also went to Nigerian churches. I'm pumped out at my dream mosque. always at the Nigerian parties. So, but, you know, most of my I'm not really too exposed. I wasn't really too exposed to American culture like (line 02:32). (DEMILADE)

Why am I especially drawn to Demilade’s story? Is it because Demilade has her sense of belonging and chose to identify herself as a Nigerian because she is familiar with the Nigerian lifestyle and the fact that she is abroad never changed her behavior? Isn’t her experience convincing enough to regard her as a Nigerian? On the one hand, the complex nature of identities definitely gives Demilade a pass mark as a Nigerian because she is not completely Americanized. Her parents played huge roles in providing her with a Nigerian lifestyle which she fully maximized. Hence, by cultural knowledge and home practices, Demilade qualifies. The big question then is: is knowledge enough? Are cultural practices within the confines of the home satisfactory for ethnic acceptance? In that I speak English and practice some of U.S. lifestyle, does that qualify me to be an American? These are open ended questions that come with many biases. In this case, my biases make me see Demilade as a Non-Nigerian. With my biases, I also do not regard the other participants as Nigerian either. For me, in one way, language and lived experiences- cultural and linguistic immersion, qualify one for ethnic acceptance. I will proceed with the compelling statement from Demilade and give my evaluation. “like I don't know I really consider myself a Nigerian to be quite frank with you. But Nigerians don't buy that, but whatever.”
Like any other native Nigerian, I do not also accept the idea that a two-month study abroad program and knowledge at the level of mere familiarity with Nigerian culture and Yoruba language make Demilade and every other participant Nigerians. First, they have no experience of an average Nigerian in terms of socio-political, economic and social realities. From their various narratives, for instance, their two months stay in Nigeria was memorable in terms of the cultural activities they engaged in. To a large extent, they were given first class treatment by their host parents who saw them as Americans and wouldn’t want to make them unhappy as seen in the following responses from Imo and Ayo:10:56 “they really did everything in their power to make me feel comfortable and 11:07 I really thank them for that stuff”. (IMO) “I’m very thankful for the host family that I had they too were willing to work with me. 00:53:07 They too were willing to make things very comfortable for me.” (AYO)

An average Nigerian lives daily with the sad experiences of poor access to electricity, bad roads, a poor education system, economic insecurity, an expensive standard of living with little earnings, among hosts of other difficulties. I take a cue below from an excerpt from Balogun (2011) who studied second generation Nigerian Americans among whom Demilade is also classified.

I have never identified myself as just a Nigerian. I’m Nigerian, but you know, I think of a Nigerian as someone that is born in Nigeria, raised in Nigeria, knows the Nigerian ways ... I’m Nigerian, but I don’t know what it’s like to live there, I wasn’t raised there. I was born there, but I can’t remember living there. So I can’t say I’m Nigerian ... I’m American because I’m Americanized. Because I’ve lived here, it’s all I know. I don’t know how it’s like to live there. [Deola, female, 18, college student, migrated to the USA at the age of two years old] (Balogun 2011:437).

The above respondent has lived in the States for sixteen years of her eighteen while Demilade and every other participants of my study are older and have lived more than 16 years in the United States. But this respondent agreed that she had no lived experience in Nigeria, hence, she wouldn’t regard herself as one. While some may regard her as someone who has lost her ethnic identity, I will agree with her self-representations and see her as being honest. This is not to say,
however, that Demilade and other participants are dishonest, rather, it’s about positioning and acceptance by other Nigerians. Many Nigerians are willing to lose their identities for better living abroad if needs be but here we have an irony playing out from people with a few weeks of experience.

As seen in their self-representations when responding to questions on how they identify themselves, all the five participants, especially Demilade, expressed their belief that they are Nigerians because they have knowledge of Yoruba culture or have Nigerian parents whose lifestyles, they are familiar with. In terms of their exposure to the Yoruba language and living experience, almost all of the participants are inexperienced as some Nigerians. Some even consider their parent’s lifestyles strange because they couldn’t find connection with many people around them behaving likewise in the United States. They seem to overlook the key elements of linguistic and cultural competence. Four of the participants just possess a basic level of Yoruba language, and most of them can’t fully comprehend Nigerian English. In addition to these limitations, some of them found it difficult to cope with the everyday realities of an average Nigerian in terms of dress, electricity, internet, food, and family setting.

Ayo’s response when I asked her the follow up question about if she were to choose between relocating to Nigeria or staying back in the US, which would be her preference greatly caught my attention. From all indications, the living condition of an average Nigerian is incomparable to that of an average U.S. middle class person. These participants wouldn’t take the risk of moving to Nigeria to live permanently despite their professed love for the country because they might not survive the realities Nigerians are faced with daily. To Ayo who’s an advanced speaker of Yoruba language, an agent of Yoruba cultural transmission and teacher of the Yoruba
language, the U.S. remains her home and Nigeria remains foreign because of her lived experiences in the United States.

From the above foreground, one can posit the notion of identity that self-belief is not enough for making a claim for ethnicity. Rather, shared lived experiences and commonalities are key. Though ethnic identity might be self-determined, local members often determine the acceptance of foreigners. For instance, Demilade considers herself a Yoruba person and a Nigerian based on her ancestral connection, her admiration for the country and her familiarity with the Yoruba culture and language. But many Nigerians like me neither consider nor accept people like her as Nigerian because we believe they are less familiar with our harsh realities. Most especially, their strong American accent in the English language affects their speech in Nigerian English and in the Yoruba language. Hence, lack of shared connection and relatedness evident in performance, makes it difficult for us to accept them as Nigerians. As Bulchotz poses “identities are never autonomous or independent but always acquire social meaning in relation to other available identity positions and other social actors” (Bulchotz 2010:598).

I was born in Nigeria and I have lived in Nigeria for three decades. I identify myself as a Nigerian and my ethnicity is Yoruba. Having experienced the socio-political, economic and religious realities of Nigeria (inadequate social infrastructure, linguistic complexity, leadership issue, problematic education) I find it difficult to regard individuals born without these realities as Nigerians. I have had the opportunity to interact with Nigerian Americans within the context of Yale classroom for ten months as a Fulbright participant. From my interaction with them (like the participants in this research), their passion for Nigerian culture is overwhelming but I assume the reason for their passion is due to their not having lived Nigeria experience.
Though my experience growing up in Nigeria initially shaped my perception of who a Nigerian is, my few months interaction with Nigerian Americans coupled with my master’s program in Linguistic Anthropology have influenced my stance on ethnic identity. Hence, I am engaging in a self-reflection on my growth and insight regarding my understanding of these participants’ ethnic/national identities.

The puzzle for me is: does non-acceptance of one’s ethnic claim by group members invalidates one’s identity claim? As we co-create knowledge and I am let into my participants’ lived experiences, I see clearly the complexities of identity. I then agree with Hall and Du Gay (1996) who in their book entitled *Questions of Cultural Identity*, argued that “the citizen too denotes an empty place. It too can be occupied by anyone - occupied in the sense of being spoken from, not in the sense of being given a substantial identity” (Hall & Du Gay 1996:74). By recognizing the open space that accommodates and welcomes anyone into the citizenship status, I am able to see my participants’ process of becoming. Their self-representation and construction position them as individuals who do not only possess shared similar heritage with Nigerians living in Nigeria, but they are also willing to pledge their allegiance to Yoruba culture and the country at large.

It is therefore very much possible to personally feel connected to a group although many nuances might make one unaccepted by that group and create some setback to one’s acceptance. Because ancestral relatedness is a given for participants of this study, their non-acceptance doesn’t discredit their identification. Though these participants have not experienced the social realities stated earlier, their relatedness in terms of internal connections and ancestral link contributes to constituting their identity process. I also consider it not out of place to regard them as Nigerians though they may feel some sense of alienation from Nigerians. Against the above backdrop, I rethink the notion of “identity” that non-acceptance from group members doesn’t make one a non-
member in as much as there’s a personal sense of sameness and connection which might not be evident in appearance and performance.

Gaining insights into the notion of identity during the process of this research, I realize that an individual can choose his/her own identity. Likewise, other people impose identity one depending on the social context and the people involved. More importantly, identity is a process of becoming. Before studying the Yoruba language in their various U.S. colleges, participants somewhat ignorant and passive users. Also, participants recorded some improvements in their second language skills and cultural awareness after participating in the YGPA program. With this process in place, the multiple nature of individual’s identity is brought to bear.

Personally, my participation in the Fulbright program and my graduate training at the Department of Geography and Anthropology have had a great impact on my person. For instance, the Fulbright program influenced me to love and appreciate my culture while my anthropological training inspired me to understand and appreciate cultural diversities. Beforehand, having an American accent would be an achievement for me. Now, I know better that everyone has an accent which is unique on its own. Hence, being humane and impacting the world positively counts for me, a deserving achievement. Like these research participants, studying abroad has shaped my identity. Hence, my transformation reflects the dynamism of my personal identity. Should I return to Nigeria someday, perceptions of me by many Nigerians wouldn’t be different due to my exposure to the U.S.

Since identity can be dynamic, fluid, multiple, and complex, decision on individual’s identity is therefore not in the hands of a particular individual. While it’s possible for an individual to decide his or her own identity, situations, events, environments, and social context also create room for other people to decide our identity. In the case of this this research, as seen in their
illustrations, research participants decided their own identities and Nigerians also decided their identities.
CHAPTER 6. THEMATIC PRE-OCCUPATION

6.1. Introduction

The preceding chapter highlights participants’ stories of others which reflected participants’ affiliation and disaffiliation with other people/institutions (that is study abroad program (YGPA), language instructors, Nigeria as an institution, Nigerians in Nigeria and the host families) as seen in their responses to the interview questions. It also included my reflections on identity. In this section, I will discuss the findings of the interviews in relations to the research questions I set out to explore. To achieve this discussion, relevant literature will be referenced, and the themes generated from the responses will be examined.

Without doubt, it’s possible that one can’t completely ascertain what language users mean when they use language considering the complexities and ambiguities that are inherent in the semiotics of language. Moreover, using only the online questionnaire interview method without being in the field observing participants’ paralinguistic cues and the components of their social actions posed additional complexity. Although these limitations are unavoidable, the way that language users situate themselves and others within a particular socio-cultural and linguistic context often helps to convey the meaning of their expressions to interlocutors. Using the theoretical framework of discourse transcription and discourse analysis, I, together with participants, underwent a process of self-reflexivity. While reflecting on their experiences, participants were able to make known their socio-cultural values and associations. Also, I gained insights on my relationship with participants’ values and beliefs.

This research work draws on Du Bois’ definition of discourse transcription as “the process of creating a representation in writing of a speech event so to make it accessible to discourse research” (Du Bois 1991:72). As Du Bois states, the transcription process should be determined
by the goals of the research. To achieve this creative representation, I embarked on an analytic paradigm (that is, I used the theoretical framework of Discourse Analysis to analyze the transcribed texts automatically generated by the computer communication system, which I lightly edited and left to be as natural as possible) that aligns with the following research questions: (1) In what ways do participants position themselves and others in the account of their experiences through language use? (2) To what extent does the study abroad experience reflect the aftereffects of the program on the research participants? After examining participants’ language use, the following themes were brought to bear in the construction of the way they represented themselves and others.

6.2. **Admiration for Yoruba Culture, Nigeria and Africa**

Responses from all the five participants revealed their love for Yoruba culture and Nigeria at large. Participants’ expression of love for the food, dress, cultural performances, Yoruba traditions, diverse people, ethnic groups, and Nigerian music brought their admiration to light. As discovered from the interviews, their love for Yoruba culture and Nigeria is intricately connected to their self-motivation to participate in the program. Before participating in the YGPA program, they had to take a course in the Yoruba language for a minimum of two semesters at their various colleges in the United States. Ayo, for instance, took Yoruba language for six out of seven years as both an undergraduate and graduate student. From their various responses concerning their love for Yoruba and Nigeria, the following statement from Demilade is worthy of note:

4:43 um because I love, I love my I love my own culture so much. So, when I see that they were offering Yoruba class. 04:54And if I was going to pay tuition, with no offense, like if I was gonna as a Nigerian person if I'm going to pay tuition for five credit class. I would rather that be for Yoruba and not for a Spanish class (DEMILADE)

Imo and Ayo identified themselves as Africans and reflect their love for the continent of Africa several times during the interview. For Imo, she was personally motivated to study African studies and Yoruba language.
Still to this day. I'm not native in any African language and I really hated that. Because I love learning about everything Africa specifically Nigeria, because that's where I'm from. And I hated that I couldn't communicate in that language. So, when I went to Howard, I, I already knew I was going to you know study Afro studies and I knew I wanted to take an African language, but I didn't necessarily know which one (IMO).

Ayo’s self-representation and love for Africa was seen when she declared herself as an Africanist. She expresses her desire for unity in Africa and identification as:

There's always going to be people trying to divide. So that's why, for me, you know, when I hear these things. I get disheartened and I think Africa at large, because I'm an African it's so important for Africa to seek to unite even more so because we've had so many all of these regions in Africa, even countries in Africa (AYO).

6.3. Family support/Needs to interact with relatives

Three of the participants (Iba, Ayo and Demilade) attributed their second language identities to the support they got from their parents and the need to communicate with their relatives in Nigeria. They all revealed how their parents and relatives instilled Yoruba culture in them and ensured they were greatly exposed to it while growing up. One could see how this effort played out through home practices, attending Nigerian parties and speaking with relatives using the language. Through this act, they all became self-motivated to be fully immersed in the Yoruba culture. They did this by positioning their parents as active agents who ensured their cultural knowledge and awareness before this agency shifted to them as individuals who became personally driven to be competent in both the Yoruba language and culture. The way these three participants positioned their parents can be seen in the following interview excerpts.

Just in terms of culture wise and language, my mom and my dad always made it a point to speak Yoruba to me so that way I always understood it, you know, when elders call from Nigeria, or you'd be out of function where there's Nigerian people there and they're speaking Yoruba. So both my mom and my dad, I feel did a really great job of making sure I had a really great foundational understanding of Yoruba and that I have no problem understanding Yoruba at all. (IBA) Oh, yeah. So, growing up for me in the US. um, it was very interesting to say the least, because I'm, you know, I'm in a Bi-tribal home. And actually, I was born and raised in Brooklyn. So, before my grandma recently died, she used to live with us and my dad's family is Muslim because he's
02:15 Like he's Yoruba. So, his family's Muslim and on my mom's family was on Christian. So, I was exposed to, you know, you know a lot like a huge part of Nigerian culture, while 02:29 growing up and not just one tribe, so you 02:32 know, when I would go to school and that would bleed into my pronunciation of certain things, people would make fun of me. (DEMIADÉ)

00:00:56 Once we left Nigeria was really important for my parents and even for my older siblings to, you know, just continue 00:01:08 How should I say this like uplifting our culture within us, I should say, and 00:01:14 you know, it's something that we were raised with, whether through the food that we ate the language that we even spoke at home. (AYO)

From the above excerpt, Iba’s parents can be seen as playing the important role of providing linguistic and cultural exposure. For Demilade, both her parents and grandmother were the active agents. Whereas, for Ayo, her parents and siblings occupy this position.

6.4. College as an agent of linguistic and cultural exposure

All the five participants attributed their full exposure to Yoruba language and culture to their various colleges. For participants like Ayo, Iba and Demilade, for whom one or both of their parents are Yoruba native speakers, they still needed to learn and immerse themselves in the culture because what they were exposed to at home wasn’t enough. They all had limited access to the language both at home and in their environment here in the U.S. For instance, Iba didn’t start speaking the Yoruba language until she started learning the language in college. Though her parents spoke the language to her, her language use at home was only passive. Iba, Demilade and Sayo were only familiar with greeting expressions and they never communicated using the language due to limited users in their environment. The five participants are revealed that they got to learn more about Yoruba language and culture when they got to college. Moreover, it’s from their various colleges they had the opportunity to learn more about the YGPA program and participate in the program.
And I hated that I couldn't communicate in that language. So when I went to Howard, I, I already knew I was going to you know study Afro studies and I knew I wanted to take an African language, but I didn't necessarily know which one. And so when I found out Yoruba was offered and I'm Nigerian I was, I was like, oh, this is perfect. (IMO)

um, because I love, I love my I love my own culture so much. So when I see that they were offering Yoruba class. And if I was going to pay tuition, with no offense, like if I was going to as a Nigerian person if I'm going to pay tuition for five credit class. I would rather that be for Yoruba and not for a Spanish class (DEMILADE)

We never really learned the language. And so I think that, and even though we don't want to go to school there and they tried to teach us Yoruba. It just never was successful so it wasn't until I got to University. My school is actually like so special that my school was the only school that taught Yoruba very well and that we were speaking in the classroom. (SAYO)

Did my undergrad and my master's program. So, I did my undergraduate degree in psychology and then I did a master's in public affairs and African Studies. So, the African Studies program that I got the chance to apply for the YGPA program. I also throughout. Honestly, I would say that when I started university was when my knowledge and my passion for my culture and just Yoruba in general, even quadrupled. (AYO)

As seen above, all the participants positioned their various colleges as the source of either their contact with the language or the propelling agent of that increased their knowledge of, understanding of, and admiration/affection for the language. This, therefore, implies that without these U.S colleges, participants wouldn’t have had such linguistic and cultural opportunities.

6.5. YGPA as an agent for social relationships and personal transformation

All the five participants identified the YGPA program as an important tool for building relationships with other people. Through the program, the five participants revealed they made friends among themselves and with people in their host communities, especially their host families. They also attributed their individual transformations to the YGPA program. This attribution, therefore, agrees with Edwards & Ye’s (2018) study which revealed that the study abroad program
avails participants of the opportunity for personal transformation and identity growth development. This is seen in participants’ testimony that the program had longlasting impacts on their behaviors. For instance, participants who were rude and disrespectful to their instructors and the program’s coordinator understood their attitudes as misconduct which they had outgrown by the time of recounting their experiences. Positioning the YGPA as a tool of friendship and change, the responses below are notable:

17:50 What did I learn. I think after being in Nigeria, I really learned honor. 17:59 I'm honoring adults, other than my parents because it's like, it's easy. Like, okay, like, you know, I respect my parents, whatever, whatever all or, you know, just kneel down and greet people in 18:09 in public but like actually just me being with adults and just honoring the adults who have different views than I. (DEMILADE)

00:16:43Like we got to go to church with them. I had my church. I was attending and like I, even I got to make friends with like, you know, the university students at University of Ibadan. (AYO)

14:48People have great relationships. I love my host family, my friends, like they had host families, we live in the same building, and all of the families in that building were friends and connected in some way and we come here to America 15:02 it's just not the same at least that I've experienced. (SAYO)

6.6. YGPA as an agent of cultural and linguistic depth/connections

According to Lekantis’s (2019) findings, the study abroad program is effective for intercultural and linguistic competence. In this research, however, the YGPA program was associated with linguistic and cultural depth. This theme played out in this research as the participants recounted the impact of the YGPA on them. Of the five participants, four revealed that the program helped increase their depths and understanding of the Yoruba culture and language. There were immersive activities on the ground for the participants to be involved with. These various activities consisted of visiting heritage sites, engaging in group performances, carrying out group projects, and living with the host families. Here, the YGPA program serves as
an effective agency which made such competence possible. Iba and Imo’s responses below illustrate this point:

04:54 (b) I do feel as though my understanding of it (Yoruba) 05:10 really reached a deeper level while I was in the program and it also allowed me to connect with other, not only other Yoruba people. 05:21 that I didn't get the chance to really connect with growing up in terms of friendships and fostering friendships. (IBA)

09:05 It was just amazing to see how in eight weeks. Like, I completely transformed and stuff that even I wasn't even learning at school because I had to follow the pace of like 09:15 my other classmates as well. And they weren't there yet. So, I couldn't necessarily jump ahead. But with this YGPA it really allowed me to be entrepreneurial within my 09:26 learnings and taking the extra step to understand different things, different aspects about Yoruba culture and they made it very immersive for us as well for the people that you know. (IBA)

27:30 Going into college, you know, I knew I wanted to study, you know, African people throughout the world on the continent in the Caribbean in the Americas, you know. Wherever and 27:42 I would that always filled me. Oh, it always feels everything I did, and even in that it was something missing. You know, again, you can read all the stuff you want you can learn, you know, from professors, all you want, but it's theory. So, going to Nigeria. 28:02 for the first time, I think. 28:08 It finally completed that theory and it help me to figure out how I wanted to put that into practice, like how I wanted what I wanted to learn. And what I wanted to master so 28:21 put that very in that practice together, you know, and it just made me feel more connected (IMO).

From the above illustrations, the participants attributed their understanding of the Yoruba language and their cultural depth to the YGPA program. For Iba, through the program, she was able to garner more knowledge about the diverse aspects of the language and culture. For Imo, the program availed her of the opportunity to not only see in practice what was theoretical to her at first but to also practice it herself.

6.7. Host Families as agents of socio-cultural and linguistic transmission

Drawing from participants’ experience, one can see how they portrayed the host families as an important aspect of the YGPA program through which they learnt more about family organization and social relationships in Yoruba homes in particular and Nigeria at large. The host families also helped in transmitting Yoruba culture and language to participants. For example, the
host families taught the participants Yoruba language and culture through social interactions with them. Moreover, while living with the host families, the participants-Ayo, Sayo and Demilade, assumed social roles that were different from what they were used to at home. For instance, Ayo who was the younger child in her biological family became an older sibling to her host siblings whom she was able to guide, lead and teach.


Although only three of the participants have parents who are native speakers of Yoruba, all the five participants identified themselves with the Yoruba language and culture. They all revealed that their love for the Yoruba language and culture made them participate in the YGPA program. Even after the program, their love appreciated. Also, the five participants identified themselves as Nigerian Americans. For participants like Imo and Demilade, they self-identified themselves strongly as Nigerians. For them, but for their accents, they would have preferred to be regarded as Nigerians. An excerpt of Imo’s response is seen below while Demilade’s was cited in the previous discussion in chapter four (page 40).

32:56 Stronger Nigerian accent I would just say I identify as a Nigerian but I think people look at me if didn’t add American into it. 33:05So I do identify myself as Nigerian American only because I was born here, and that's it. Um, but I've definitely side more my Nigerian side than anything American I think the only reason I'm American, honestly, because I was born here, and that is it.33:22But I do have believe. Yeah, I do have, I say, I would to answer the question, I'm sorry. Before I go on, and on, Nigerian American (IMO)

6.9. Accent as a defining factor for group acceptance

As seen from Imo’s submission above and Demilade’s below, one can see that participants believe their accents played huge role in their national identity. For Imo, her accents wouldn’t allow her to completely self-identify as a Nigerian. She believed her accents in English and in Yoruba didn’t allow her to fit such labelling and categorization. Hence, Imo personally constructed
her group belonging. Demilade, however, strongly identified herself as Nigerian regardless. In her construction, Nigerians are regarded as active agents who determined and accepted such identification as seen in line 26:19-line 26:28 below:

26:06 as a Nigerian. If someone ask me what am I 26:09 immediately I say I'm Nigerian 26:12 I say I am Yoruba and Igbo 26:19 I don't, I mean what I understand that I'm Nigerian American but like I don't know I really consider myself a Nigerian to be quite frank with you. 26:28But Nigerians don't buy that, but whatever. (DEMILADE)

6.10. YGPA Structure as Cause of Intragroup Conflict

In Sayo’s response to the question on whether lack of motivation resulted in the misbehaviors of some of the participants as stated by Ayo, the structure of the program was identified. According to her, some participants were frustrated with the program instructors’ pedagogy and with infrastructural issues (that is traffic and lack of electricity) in Nigeria. Hence, the YGPA structure was blamed and regarded as the factor responsible for participants’ misconduct which often resulted in intra group conflict. This conflict played out when the dissatisfied group in the cohort reacted rudely to the instructors and the program’s coordinator. The other group of students who saw nothing wrong with the program, were discouraged with such bad behavior. Sayo’s perspective is seen below.

27:11 Oh, well, no, I think that all of us students coming in, we're extremely motivated. I think that it was just really the structure, the program frustrated a lot of people 27:23 Yeah it the structure of the program was taught 27:27 With, like for instance, like I'm a professor in Nigeria. I mean, in Cornell teaches it or just like with any education like research something that it will be like top notch. 27:40 Or this as much as it can be in a place with 27:43 Traffic and the lights and all these things, but 27:45 As a main thing. It wasn't the students. Yeah. (SAYO)

Sayo’s statement above implies that the students are not to be blamed but external factors such as the program’s structure, the Yoruba instructors for the program in Nigeria and the environment (that is, Nigeria). Underscoring this statement is comparison between the instructors in Nigeria and the U.S. as seen in line 27:27. Another comparison is seen between the learning
environment in the U.S. and Nigeria. Participants’ frustration, and the conflict in this cohort was attributed to the structure of YGPA.

In previous studies (Lekantis (2019), Sato (2010), Edwards & Ye’(2018), Ellwood (2011)), researchers focused on the impact of study abroad program on participants and the relationship between the program and second language identities. In their findings, they revealed that the study abroad program is effective for intercultural and linguistic competence, avails participants of the opportunity for personal transformation and identity growth, and stresses that social interactions-contexts determine second language identities. While my research doesn’t investigate whether participants in the YGPA enhanced participants’ linguistic and cross-cultural competence, it does show that that the program had great impact on participants’ linguistic depth and cultural connections. Moreover, the program greatly changed participants’ behaviors. This research agrees with Ellwood’s (2011) finding that social interactions determine second language identities. Examining participants’ language use, one can see how they construct their linguistic identities during the interview. I was able to see participants’ admiration for the Yoruba language and their linguistic abilities as recounted by participants in the excerpts above.

This research is also in line with Allen’s (2010) study, which revealed that though motivation influenced students’ learning behavior, activity generated and other factors (internal/external) make motivation dynamic. Internal factors at play here are personal and related to each student (that is individual tactics or initiatives) while external factors are from their social relationships with friends, the hosts, and the institution. As seen in this research, the participants’ motivation to participate in the program wasn’t enough to sustain their interests. Some of them were discouraged with the structure of the program which affected their attitude. Though they all
expressed their love for the various cultural activities carried out, other factors like pedagogy and setting affected their learning behavior.

Whereas Miller’s (2010) study on study abroad and language use revealed that language is used to reflect self-exclusion/inclusion from social interaction, this research showed that language is used for self-inclusion and exclusion from group membership and social behavior as seen in how participants like Ayo and Imo who excluded themselves from the group were regarded as being rude.

Though some of the findings of my research agree with those from existing literature on study abroad, this research is entirely different. Literature on study abroad mostly investigate the impact of study abroad on participants’ language skills and pedagogy (Lenkaitis 2019; Allen 2010 and Anderson et. al 2016). Other literature on study abroad and identities focused on second language identities (Benson et.al 2012; Barron 2016; Jackson 2008; Bardovi-Harlig & Bastos 2011; Edwards & Ye 2018; Miller 2010; Higgins 2012). While in my research, the goal is to explore how language is used in personal identity constructions. Like Jackson (2008) says, participants’ real experiences determine their competence as they use language for self-representation, social practices, group membership, and to establish their identities across differences and knowledge of self in relations to others; the participants of my research also did the same. However, Jackson (2008) didn’t establish the mechanism by which this was accomplished—the “how”. The “how” is, therefore, pivotal to this discussion. Hence, the findings below show how participants construct their identities and the identities of others.

One predominant linguistic behavior of the participants of this research is the use of deictic expressions in their self-identifications and their relationship with others. They all used the personal, time and place deixis to reflect their identities. Using the deictic first person singular
pronoun “I” for instance, participants underscored linguistic and cultural growth, their position regarding their ethnic identities and nationalities. Iba and Demilade’s illustrations below are quite affirming:

26:02 I see myself. 26:06 as a Nigerian. If someone ask me what I am 26:09 immediately I say I'm Nigerian 26:12 I say I am Yoruba and Igbo 26:19 I don't, I mean I understand that I'm Nigerian American but like I don't know I really consider myself a Nigerian to be quite frank with you. 26:28 But Nigerians don't buy that, but whatever (DEMILADE).

04:35 Definitely a lot happened within those eight weeks that I was in Nigeria, a lot happened.04:42 But I will say that it has enhanced my Yoruba to a point where, you know, not only do I feel comfortable just understanding and regurgitating back to people, but 04:54 I make it a point to where even if I meet Yoruba person. Let's say on the street or I'm talking to someone, I always try to, you know, use Yoruba and speak Yoruba with them. So, I do feel as though my understanding of it. 05:10 really reached a deeper level while I was in the program and it also allowed me to connect with other, not only other Yoruba people. 05:21 that I didn't get the chance to really connect with growing up in terms of friendships and fostering friendships.05:26 But also people that you know have an appreciation for Nigerian culture and Nigerian language (IBA).

Using the first person singular personal deictic pronoun “I”, Demilade revealed how she saw herself and not any other person. One can also see her response to the question for her self-definition as a Yoruba, Igbo and Nigerian. Her unbothered attitude about the perception of Nigerians about her cultural and national identities is also seen in line 26:28. Iba also deployed this tool to reveal her personal growth and linguistic identities during the interview. Positioning herself, one can see an individual who had passive usage of the language becoming an active user, most especially, in terms of social relationships with other people.

Ayo’s use of the spatial location deictic “here” in lines 14:02 and lines 24:28 to refer to the U.S. while the same deictic refers to Nigeria in line 26:30 below. This expression in the previous lines reflect tone of closeness to the U.S. which is why she referred to it as her home. Using the deictic to refer to Nigeria, one can perceive a tone of distance as seen below:

00:14:02These are issues that we don't face here in the US, there's 00:24:28 extended family members, but most of my family cousins, everyone all live here [U.S.] my siblings. Everyone is here [U.S.]. So, but the people I know that I like, okay, maybe like friends and
things like that are all in Ibadan and I met them through the YGPA program. It was kind of annoying. The fact that when we're in a different country and you know you guys can't even put your differences aside and just focus on the reason why we're here [in Nigeria]. (AYO)

The first two lines were Ayo’s responses to the question she was asked about if she would prefer to stay in Nigeria or the U.S. should she be given an option to choose. Illustrating with reasons citing the presence of her family in the U.S., her stance is made known. Given some illustration in line 26:30 about the attitude of the group, how she perceived Nigeria at that point in time as a temporal place is clearly seen. Imo, on the other hand, used the deictic to depict some distant tone in terms of her perception of the United States. For her, the only tie she has with the country was due to her birth status. Through this positioning below, Imo national identity is made known. 33:05

“So I do identify myself as Nigerian American only because I was born here [U.S.], and that's it. Um, but I've definitely side more my Nigerian side than anything American I think the only reason I'm American, honestly, because I was born here [U.S.], and that is it.” (IMO)

More importantly, in participants’ use of these expressions, their affiliation with and exclusion from a group can be ascertained. To show their association with Yoruba culture and Nigerian heritage for instance, various first person deictics such as “I”, “we”, “us”, “our” and the third person plural pronoun “they”, “them” and “their” were used. An example can be seen in the following expression by Ayo and Demilade. Imo and Ayo dissociated themselves from the group of participants that were considered rude by referring to them using deictics such as “they”, “them” and “their” to show that they do not belong to the group. Imo, for instance, referred to the disrespectful group in her cohort as “they” in the second sentence of line 07:47 below when recounting an incident that occurred during their visit to one of the heritage sites. Because the disrespectful group were uncomfortable with the type of faulty vehicle that was used to transport them, they got angry when the vehicle caught fire and became rude to the instructors. Imo and the
group to which she belonged saw the occurrence as a normal unplanned life event. Hence, she stated thus:

07:47 There was a group, though I found to be a little bit more disrespectful. And then there was the group, I was in. And so, they were kind of making a scene about it. Oh, like we [first person, quoting the other group] come here we [first person, quoting the other group] paid the program, Blah, Blah, blah. (IMO)

Imo also showed her disaffiliation with this group when describing their attitude on the program as seen in the following description:

26:12 They would have arguments have fights. I mean, like they were, it was, it wasn’t nothing 26:20 to write home about. So, I think that was definitely the biggest challenge that I faced. I definitely stay clear of any of the drama that they had 26:30 BUT it was kind of annoying. The fact that when we’re [the whole group] in a different country and you know you guys [addressing the mis-behaviors] can’t even put your differences aside and just focus on the reason why we’re [the whole group] here. (AYO)

Since deictic expressions are referential, they helped push the notion that identities are constructed within a particular socio-cultural context to the fore. Line 26:30 above shed more light on this assertion. It is interesting to see how Ayo used the pronoun “we’ to index the whole participants as belonging to the same group, that is, Nigerian Americans with the collective goal of linguistic and cultural immersion in Nigeria. In this context, her identification with the group is clearly seen in their shared cultural admiration and affection for the language. In another context, she disaffiliated with social actions of the rude group and brought to bear their dissimilar cultural values and behaviors. Ayo’s identification with the group and rejection of their social actions therefore index self-positioning in the social interaction. Participants’ deictic usage, therefore, shows the multiple nature of identities as seen in Hall and Bulcholtz (2011).

It is also interesting to see how participants’ language use shows the relationship between language and identity. Imo couldn’t completely claim to be a Nigerian because she believed her accent wouldn’t make Nigerians or other people see her as one. Demilade on the other hand saw herself as a Nigerian but she believed Nigerians didn’t accept such a claim due to her accent in
English and her U.S. background that reflects in her Yoruba language use. Hence, accent becomes a defining factor of their identities. This factor of accent suggests that people’s identities can be determined for them and by others. In this case, Nigerians determined Demilade’s identity by regarding her more as a foreigner and not as a Nigerian. Although Demilade is personally convinced of her ethnicity and national identification, Nigerians do not see her as sharing this similarity. Imo also believed that her accent wouldn’t allow her to participate in categorization as a Nigerian.

In constructing their views of others, participants viewed the identities of others through political, social and economic lens. Socially, Nigerians are regarded as lively people with team spirit and communal lifestyles. However, western influence, corrupt leaders and exploitative colonial masters have affected the country’s development. Participants in the YGPA program were able to form and articulate these opinions within eight weeks of their stay in the country. During this period, they had full exposure to the people’s social realities. Although participants can’t easily relate with these social realities from their U.S. upbringing, they identified themselves with Nigeria because of its language, culture, and people. Hence, language, culture and people influence the personal and ethnic identification of the participants of this research.

The aftereffects of the YGPA program on the participants are long-lasting social transformation and growth in their second language identities. While recounting their experiences, all the participants revealed that they still felt the impact of the program at the time of the interview. For instance, Imo’s recognition of her rudeness to the king and the coordinator of the program showed her social transformation. All the Participants’ attributed their in-depth understanding of Yoruba language and cultural practices to the YGPA program. The YGPA is seen as a productive context of self-modeling and cultural awareness.
CHAPTER 7. CONCLUSION

This research explored how five young women, all Nigerian Americans, who participated in Yoruba Group Project Abroad in 2018 and 2019, used language to construct their identities. My aim as a researcher has been to examine the following: (1) the ways participants position themselves and others in the account of their experiences through language use, and (2) the after-effects of the study abroad experience on the participants. The creative power of language as a communicative process within a socio-cultural context can’t be overemphasized. These communicative events can be seen in the language use of the research participants. As seen in the examination of their language use, participants use language to reflect their world views, social/cultural behaviors, identities and perception of others.

In the context of self-positioning, participants’ family background, their admiration for the Yoruba language, and their affection for Nigeria personally motivated them to study the Yoruba language at their various colleges and also participate in the YGPA study abroad program. That participants were self-motivated made them the sole determiners of their decisions. Participants are also highly motivated to ensure that the Yoruba language and culture are transmitted to coming generations. Though they were all motivated, the unfamiliar environment resulted in some participants’ misconduct. Misbehaviors then resulted in the formation of groupings within the program. Participants’ use of deictic expressions helped push their personalities to the fore. This linguistic behavior suggests the role of deictic expressions in understanding how identities are contextually situated and constructed.

Participants’ participation in the program greatly enhanced their social relationships, linguistic understanding and cultural connection. Participants attributed these cultural and linguistic gains to their family, their host families and the YGPA structure, thus, positioning them
as active agents. Visiting heritage sites and living with the host families for instance, aided participants’ cultural and linguistic exposure.

Moreover, the impacts of the YGPA program on the participants are seen in their personal growth and social transformation. Participants’ personal growth was intricately linked to their second language development. Though not all of them were competent in the language, they all reported that the different activities they engaged in not only helped their understanding of the Yoruba language and culture but also made them appreciate cultural diversities. Through the program, participants like Ayo, the youngest in her birth family, came to occupy the social role of an older sibling to her host younger siblings. In terms of social transformation, all the participants stated that the program helped change some of their previous misbehaviors. Someone like Iba who was rude became conscious of her attitude.

I worked with Potter’s (2004) principles that discourse is action-oriented, discourse is situated, and discourse is constructed (Potter 2004:609) to examine how these principles played out in participants’ identity construction. To a large extent, participants’ communicative acts agreed with the notion that identity is not fixed and that an individual has multiple identities. The ways participants positioned themselves in their expressions showed them as self-driven, active agents of cultural transmission, language learners, and language teachers. Through their linguistic construction, one can ascertain their stance on their ethnic and national identities as Nigerians/Nigerian Americans.

On the other hand, Iba’s account showed that there are aspects of people’s identities that are fixed. During the program, Iba didn’t accept the idea of washing her hair at the waterfall located at the palace. As at the time she was reflecting and recounting her experience, her perspective still didn’t change, although she regretted her manner of approach to the king and program’s
coordinator which she now considered to be rude. This research therefore brings to bear the importance of language use in understanding the notion of identities.

7.1. Avenues for Future Research

The findings of this research provided perspectives on how language is used for identity construction and human relationship as illustrated by these few selected YGPA participants. Since these selected YGPA participants are an aspect of the program, it’s important to also examine the perceptions of other YGPA stakeholders. Hence, I would like to recommend the following:

1. Future researchers can investigate the language use of the YGPA host families and their identity construction.
2. Future research can also be carried out on the Yoruba instructors both in the U.S colleges and in Nigeria.
3. Participant’s parents can also be interviewed to examine their dispositions towards their children’s participations in the YGPA program.
APPENDIX 1. IRB APPROVAL

ACTION ON PROTOCOL APPROVAL REQUEST

TO: Mary Brody
    Geography & Anthropology

FROM: Alex Cohen
    Chair, Institutional Review Board

DATE: June 22, 2020

RE: IRB# 4399

TITLE: Study Abroad Experience in Yoruba Group Project Abroad: Discourse Analysis of Participant's Narratives and Language Use in Identity Constructions


Review type: Full X Expedited  

Risk Factor: Minimal  

Approved X Disapproved  

Approval Date: 6/19/2020 Approval Expiration Date: 6/18/2021  

Re-review frequency: Annually  

Number of subjects approved: 5  

LSU Proposal Number (if applicable):

By: Alex Cohen, Chairman

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING –
Continuing approval is CONDITIONAL on:
1. Adherence to the approved protocol, familiarity with, and adherence to the ethical standards of the Belmont Report, and LSU’s Assurance of Compliance with DHHS regulations for the protection of human subjects*.  
2. Prior approval of any change in protocol, including revision of the consent documents or an increase in the number of subjects over that approved.
3. Obtaining renewed approval (or submittal of a termination report), prior to the approval expiration date, upon request by the IRB office (irrespective of when the project actually starts), notification of project termination.
4. Retention of documentation of informed consent and study records for at least 3 years after the study ends.
5. Continuing attention to the physical and psychological well-being and informed consent of the individual participants, including notification of new information that might affect consent.
6. A prompt report to the IRB of any adverse event affecting a participant potentially arising from the study.
8. SPECIAL NOTE: When emailing more than one recipient, make sure you use bcc.

*All investigators and support staff have access to copies of the Belmont Report, LSU’s Assurance with DHHS, DHHS (45 CFR 46) and FDA regulations governing use of human subjects, and other relevant documents in print in this office or on our World Wide Web site at http://www.lsu.edu/research

88
APPENDIX 2. INTERNET CONSENT FORM

Interview Consent Form for Yoruba Group Project Abroad Online Research

1. **Study Title:** Study Abroad Experience in Yoruba Group Project Abroad: Discourse Analysis of Participants' Narratives and Language Use in Identity Construction

2. **Purpose:** The purpose of my study is to examine participants’ use of language in identity construction. I am interested in how participants use language to position themselves and other people/institutions. The study will take place from June 1, 2020 to August 15, 2020, but I may contact you after that date for follow-up questions or some clarification. Your expected time in the study will be a one-hour unstructured online interview. The participation may audio or audio-visual recording.

3. **Risks:** This study poses no more than minimal risk because participants’ information will be treated with utmost confidentiality. The only study risk is the release of your personal information gathered. However, I will make every effort to ensure the confidentiality of your records by using pseudonyms and treating your information as anonymous. Transcripts and other recorded files will be encrypted electronically.

4. **Benefits:** There will be no direct casual return for participating.

5. **Investigators:** Tawakalitu Odunayo Lasisi can be reached anytime at tlasis2@lsu.edu
   **Supervisor:** Professor Mary Jill Brody can be reached at gajill@lsu.edu

6. **Performance Site:** Online

7. **Number of Subjects:** At least, 5 participants will be interviewed.

8. **Subject:**
   **Inclusion:** Nigerian-American Yoruba language learners between the ages of 18 to 65. To participate in this study, you must meet the requirements of both the inclusion and exclusion criteria.
   **Exclusion:** Non-Nigerian Americans under 18 years or above 65 years old.
   **The project director,** Fulbright-Hays Intensive Advanced Yoruba GPA Howard University, Dr. Bayo Omolola has been contacted and he is willing to provide the contacts of subjects provided the research is approved by required authority. When these contacts are made available, the subjects would be contacted via email/text messages to seek their availability. To be assured of their qualification for inclusion and exclusion, copy of this consent form would be scanned and emailed to them. Efforts would equally be made by the researcher to re-read this requirement to subjects’ hearings for clarifications and mutual understanding.

9. **Right to Refuse:** Subjects between the ages of 18 to 65 who do not report any psychological or neurological conditions may choose to participate or withdraw from this research at any time without penalty.

10. **Privacy:** Results of the study may be published but no names or identifying information will be included in the publication. Identified subjects will remain confidential unless disclosure is required by law.

11. **Signatures:**
    The study has been discussed with me and all my questions have been answered. I may direct additional questions regarding study specifics to the investigators. For injury or illness, call your physician, or the Student Health Center if you are an LSU student. If I have questions about subjects; rights or other concerns, I can contact Alex Cohen,
Institutional Review Board (+1) (225)-578-7017, irb@lsu.edu, or www.lsu.edu/research. I agree to participate in the study described above and acknowledge the investigator’s obligation to provide me with a signed copy of this consent form.

Signature: ------------------------------    Date:________________________

The study subject has indicated to me that he/she is unable to read. I certify that I have read this consent form to the subject and explained that by completing the signature line above, the subject has agreed to participate.

Signature of Reader:...................    Date:________________________
APPENDIX 3. QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS

1. How would you describe your family background and upbringing?

2. How will you define yourself?

3. Why did you participate in the study abroad program?

4. Tell me about your study abroad experience.

5. Were your expectations met?

6. What significant event would you like to share?

7. How was your relationship with members of host community?

8. Any challenges and how were you able to overcome them?

9. What’s your perception of the host country?

10. Any difference(s) between the host country and your home country you would like to share?

11. Would you like to go back to the host country for further language study or a visit?

12. Would you say the program had any influence on you?

13. Any Yoruba/Nigerian lifestyle you are pleased or displeased with?

14. What significant lessons did you learn on the program that you would like to share?
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VITA

Tawakalitu Lasisi is Nigerian. She received her Bachelor of Arts degree in English at the University of Lagos in 2015. Thereafter, she worked as a teacher of English and Literature in English in Lagos, Nigeria. Her interest in anthropology grew in 2018 when she participated in the Foreign Language Teaching Assistant (FLTA) Fulbright program at Yale University. Afterwards, she decided to enter the graduate program in the Department of Geography and Anthropology at Louisiana State University to study Linguistic Anthropology in the fall of 2019. She expects to graduate in May 2021, with a Master of Arts in Anthropology. She plans to pursue a career in social work.