
Foreign Language Reading and Study Abroad: Cross-Cultural and Cross-Linguistic Questions

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Little cross-cultural empirical research has been devoted to expectations for academic performance of study abroad (SA) students, particularly in their foreign language (FL) reading. This study explored pre-mobility English and French FL reading comprehension and strategy use in 177 European SA students of law and economics. Our concern was whether students of particular academic literacy and sociolinguistic backgrounds (English and Irish, French, Spanish, German, Dutch, and Flemish Belgian), at given levels of FL competency, would differ significantly in their reading skill and strategy use, and whether causal inference might be drawn regarding grades during their SA experience. Test results revealed equivalent FL competency but a clear hierarchy in both FL reading comprehension and strategy use: English-language (British and Irish) and French students ranking highest, followed by Spanish, German, and Dutch-speaking students. Causal effects of reading on academic results varied across groups. The findings are interpreted in terms of the interaction of different cross-cultural academic literacy and FL traditions and of FL competency. Pedagogical recommendations are made, along with suggestions for further study.

INTERNATIONALIZING UNIVERSITY STUDIES has become a major concern for educators around the world, and Europeans are no exception, with a tradition of mobility dating back to the Middle Ages. Today, the European Union (EU) promotes study abroad (SA) within its member and associated states primarily through the ERASMUS program, which began in 1987. Since that time, the number of participants involved has grown exponentially now to include nearly 100,000 students per year, on stays of 3 to 12 months, from 2,000 institutions of higher education in 30 countries. The budget for 2003–2004 ran to almost 130 million euros.¹ Even greater mobility is foreseen within the new European Higher Education Area, created by the European Ministers of Education in 1998.

With such considerable human and monetary resources at stake, feedback on the European SA experience is obviously necessary. Only a few EU-wide evaluations have been carried out to investigate academic, social, practical, and personal aspects of student exchanges (Coleman, 1997; Rosselle & Lentiez, 1999; Teichler & Maiworm, 1997). Two projects of the European Commission specifically pinpointed nonlanguage majors involved in student exchanges (Forster-Vosicki, Fraser, & Fischikowski, 2000; Mackiewicz, 1995). Among key concerns were the level of integration of language courses across curricula for nonlanguage majors, their degree of specialization, the standardized assessment of language performance, and the awarding of academic credit.

Nearly 150,000 American students a year engage in SA programs, and aspects of SA have also been researched from the North American perspective (Collentine & Freed, 2004). In a special issue of *Frontiers* devoted to language learning

in the SA context, Freed (1998) presented an overview of issues and research into the growth of American SA students' language proficiency (primarily oral fluency, vocabulary, and communicative strategies). In the same publication, Coleman (1998) provided American readers with insights into the European SA context. Most recently, Collentine and Freed (2004) introduced a special issue of *Studies in Second Language Acquisition* exploring the effects of different foreign language (FL) learning contexts, such as SA, on second language (L2) acquisition.

But most studies of FL skills in SA contexts have focused on gains in linguistic, pragmatic, and cultural competencies related to listening and speaking, with little attention given to reading competency. Freed (1998) summarized the multidimensional work of Brecht, Davidson, Ginsberg, Robinson, Robin, and Wheeling in the early 1990s, which reported that premobility FL reading and grammar proficiency were strong predictors of improvement in speaking and listening, as well as reading, during SA. Freed herself advanced that students' "linguistic identities extend beyond the expected acquisition of oral skills to a new self-realization in the social world of literacy" (p. 50). Coleman (1998) cited a lack of correlation between "passive" (i.e., reading) contact with a FL and general proficiency gain, with only one objective measurement reporting greater improvement in oral skills as opposed to reading and writing skills. Meus and Räsänen (2000) addressed the existence of discipline-specific language courses concerned with terminology and reading skills in business studies and law in a number of countries.

Only two studies, to our knowledge, have specifically targeted FL reading in a relatively short-term (1 semester to 1 year) SA context. In 1998, Kline posited that earlier quantitative research into cognitive and linguistic aspects of reading comprehension made it difficult to draw conclusions about reading and SA. She opted for a qualitative, ethnographic approach, exploring the process of literacy as social practice among American students studying in France. Her observations revealed several unexpected findings and led her to conclude that SA students forge a new hybrid literate identity. More recently, Dewey (2004) compared the development of reading comprehension and processes among Japanese as a foreign language students in immersion programs and in SA. Only significant gains in self-assessment, as compared with reading recall or vocabulary knowledge, differentiated comprehension between students in the two contexts (in favor of SA). Monitoring understanding and

responding to text differentiated reading processes over time (in favor of immersion students). Both of these authors stressed the importance of complementary quantitative and qualitative explorations of the product as well as the process of reading in the SA context.

Thus, reading for academic purposes in SA contexts is not just about decoding text in a FL. It calls into play the varying role of reading in specific academic settings, that is, what the student is accustomed to in the home environment and what he or she will be expected to do in the host country. ERASMUS students spend either a semester or, more often, a full academic year abroad, and generally take regular academic courses with national students. In some cases, support is offered in the local language or in English for academic purposes, or both, where the latter is the language of instruction, and for most students, grades count toward degrees in their home country. Students in this nonsheltered environment are therefore under pressure to integrate into a new academic literacy community, bearing what Johns (1997) has described as the "cost of affiliation" (p. 64) and Kline (1998) as the "costs of L2 literacy" (p. 158). This price to pay implies conscious comparison and contrast not only of language and genre, but also of educational values and assumptions, often over a short period of time.

At the end of the 1990s, Kline (1998) warned that faculty and SA program directors should be explicitly aware of (a) their own approach to academic literacy, (b) that of their foreign students, and (c) that of the host destinations of their own outgoing students. More recent studies continue to signal how native conceptions of literacy of the foreign students may penalize them, even over periods of time longer than the usual semester or year abroad. Raymond and Parks (2002) documented how Chinese students in a 2-year Master of Business Administration (MBA) program in Canada paid the price in poor grades. Their "historically inscribed academic practices" (p. 153) made it difficult for them to deal with the demanding Western reading and writing requirements. Newman, Trenchs-Parera, and Pujol (2002) showed how a Latino immigrant undergraduate in the United States began to succeed academically when she realized that reading tasks requiring extraction of form and detail demanded a bottom-up approach, not her natural top-down treatment.

What, then, should faculty and administrators, as well as students, in the European context specifically consider regarding approaches to academic literacy during SA? First, it will be seen that

reading research has shown how literacy expectations and practices differ across both national and disciplinary cultures. Second, FL research will be seen to reveal great differences across European countries in the importance given to FL teaching and learning and in levels of students' competency. Both key literacy and language considerations interact to influence FL reading. On the cognitive level, the linguistic interdependence and the linguistic threshold hypotheses compare the relative roles of native language (L1) reading skill and FL competency (Alderson, 1984; Bernhardt & Kamil, 1995; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Urquhart & Weir, 1998). On the social level, Atkinson (2002) has argued that FL acquisition occurs not just "in the head" but "in the world" (p. 525).

So, although cross-cultural academic literacy and FL traditions need to be understood, no empirical research in the European SA context has yet explored the possible impact of these factors. Given the stakes involved, we thus questioned whether differences would appear, within specific disciplines, among national groups at the outset of SA, in comprehension (the product of reading) and in strategic approach (the process of reading). We also questioned whether causal inference could be drawn between pre-mobility FL reading competency and SA academic results. In other words, would students of different national backgrounds be at a disadvantage even before taking their first class abroad?

The present study involved 177 ERASMUS students of economics and law from 35 universities in the United Kingdom and Ireland (native English speakers), France, Spain (including a few bilingual Catalan/Castilian speakers), Germany, the Netherlands, and Dutch-speaking Belgium. Before detailing the research design, however, we will first turn to what the pertinent literacy and language learning literature tells us about the sociocultural and sociolinguistic background of the groups involved in the study—what Kline (1998) and others have said we should be aware of cross-culturally.

CROSS-CULTURAL LITERACY EXPECTATIONS AND PRACTICES

Richardson (1995) distinguished between two fundamentally different approaches to studying in higher education, apparent across a wide cultural spectrum: an orientation where "comprehending the meaning of the materials to be learned" is key, and one where priority is given to "being able to reproduce those materials for the purposes of academic assessment"

(p. 300). Teaching is accordingly geared more toward problem-solving in the first case and imparting knowledge in the second (Abu-Rabia & Feuerverger, 1996; Meus & Räsänen, 2000). Johns (1997) spoke of "communities of practice" (p. 52) that distinguish among national and academic groups based on values, concepts, genres, lexis, and practices. Ridgway (2003) argued that whereas culturally specific literacies may differ at the level of skills and strategies (the way readers of any one culture cognitively process text), reading styles and attitudes (readers' mind set as regards literacy) are also socioculturally programmed and influence literate behavior. In a similar vein, Schraw and Bruning (1996) suggested that different levels of text recall are a function of sociolinguistically informed "mental models of the reading process" (p. 290).

Reports on actual L1 academic literacy practices in the national cultures involved in the present study bear evidence to the preceding ideas and shed direct light on the challenges facing students moving among the different countries. Although differences exist among British and Irish (and North American) models of higher education, the approach to studying may be deemed *comprehending*. Taillefer and Pugh (1997) observed that "in the older British universities one spoke, and still speaks of, reading a subject" (p. 13). Taillefer (in press) reported in a comparison of L1 literacy practices of British, French, and Spanish law and economics students, for example, that high percentages of British students as compared with French or Spanish students read before attending lectures, that teachers require 4 to 5 hours weekly reading per course, and that independent research and well-stocked libraries are seen as priorities.

The French profile, although primarily *reproductive*, also reflects some aspects of *comprehending* models. On the one hand, Carton (1997) described the French academic model as traditionally emphasizing rote learning, detailed accuracy, and formal perfection. Taillefer (in press) showed that undergraduate law and economics students in France spend more time in the classroom than on personal work (an average of 22 hours per week vs. 15–17 hours, respectively) and are not expected to read much on their own (see also Bourdieu, Charle, & Lacroix, 1997; Lahire, 1997). Textbooks are rarely required, assessment is limited to written (and to a lesser extent, oral) exams, and passing courses is seen as weakly related to reading. Taillefer also showed that the French had the lowest percentage of teachers (compared to British and Spanish

colleagues) who ordered materials for the library. French university libraries—as a cause or as a result—thus compare unfavorably to British (and North American) facilities. Indeed, the *Inspecteur général des bibliothèques* recently concluded that university libraries still suffer from a very traditional image (library = books) and are not always well integrated into university culture (Renoult, 2004). On the other hand, in a more comprehending mode, French students nevertheless claimed that when they read, it was more to expand on knowledge gained in courses rather than merely to assimilate information (Taillefer, in press). French students also reported reading significantly more outside their assigned bibliography than either their British or Spanish counterparts. French law students reported relying the least of all participants on their class notes alone.

Spain has traditionally also been considered a reproductive academic culture, as Bernárdez (1995) explained. The teaching system relies heavily on lecture courses of often 20 class hours or more per week, leaving little time for reading or individual work. Taillefer (in press) reported that Spanish students, compared to their British or French counterparts, did the least reading before class, made the least use of bibliographies (law students especially) and depended most heavily on class notes alone (notably economics students). Their teachers, compared to British and French colleagues, expected the least amount of reading. But over the last 20 years, societal, and educational, transition (Bernárdez, 1995) has resulted in a lesser degree of formality in teaching with some development of interactive teaching methods, particularly in economics faculties.

The literacy practices of students from the Netherlands and from Dutch-speaking Belgium show a certain degree of similarity. University entrance in the Netherlands is highly selective, and a comprehending approach requires students to read in both their L1 and a FL (Zwarts, 1995). FL reading requirements are less formal in Belgium, perhaps due to the relatively open access to universities or to the complex sociolinguistic relations among the three linguistic communities: Dutch, French, and German (Van de Craen, 1995). The academic model is seen as a mixture of both comprehending and reproducing approaches.

Finally, Germany is clearly seen to reflect a comprehending academic culture. Teichler and Maiworm (1997), in their evaluation of SA under ERASMUS, stated: “The highest academic standards of courses and achievement levels of students [across countries participating in ERASMUS] are reported for German higher education”

(p. 214). They reported that independent reading and research are key features of the German academic culture.

Beyond the scope of the five cultures examined in the present case, other empirical studies underscore the influence of national culture on academic literacy, in L1, FL, or L2 contexts. Parry (1996) explained differences in readers’ strategic text processing by the way “cultural communities represent, use, and teach both language and literacy” (p. 687). She contrasted the use of translation between FL readers from different national, more or less multilingual, backgrounds who had been schooled, respectively, in top-down and bottom-up approaches. Davis and Bistodeau (1993) suggested the likely impact of schooling in the United States or France on reading strategy use among native English- and French-speaking readers. Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995) reported how a single strategy scale reliably revealed differences in FL learning strategies across many different cultural groups. More recently, Newman et al. (2002) underlined how culture accounts for the wide variation found in academic literacy practices of students from different origins, whatever their place of study. Both “mainstream” American students and Latino immigrant students in a U.S. university tended to read the bare minimum, and in a superficial manner, relying mostly on lectures for information, whereas Catalan students in their native Spain were sophisticated readers who depended on text for information, “mistrusting” lectures (p. 12).

Academic literacy is also seen to influence the product of reading—comprehension. Kaplan (1966, 1995) first contrasted rhetoric itself in expository prose across languages (and thus cultures), highlighting differences in academic texts in, among other languages, English, German, and Romance languages. Ulijn and Salager-Meyer (1998) further distinguished the construction of academic texts specifically between those written in English and German, as well as in French and Spanish. Such differences in texts themselves have been reported to influence text recall in cross-cultural contexts (see Carrell, 1984, for descriptions of Spanish, Arabic, Korean, and Chinese ESL students; Pritchard, 1990, for a comparison of L1 American English and Palauan readers).

Finally, cross-cultural academic literacy also involves a complex interplay between disciplinary and national cultures. Marked differences in reading practices among disciplines appear both within single countries and across national boundaries. In France, for example, Taillefer (1995) and Fijalkow and Taillefer (1997) found that teacher

conceptions and student use of bibliography differed among the disciplines of history, French, psychology, and sociology. Lahire (1997) pointed out significant differences in a survey of study practices across 10 disciplines in France. Internationally, Flowerdew and Miller (1995) gave many examples of variations in disciplinary culture between British and Hong Kong contexts centering on characteristic theories, concepts, norms, vocabulary, and discourse structure. Valero-Garcés (1996) explored intercultural variations in metatext in Spanish and English economic texts. Finally, as ERASMUS coordinator for the French *Université des Sciences Sociales* in Toulouse, we saw how British teachers of law contrasted the narrative and embedded style of typical 15-page U.K. law reports to the concise, dense, “dry,” style of the one- to three-page French case reports (S. Field, personal communication, 1999). A native French professor of international accounting, teaching her subject in English to an international student body, related problems with vocabulary. Cognates such as *prudence* do not share the same connotations in either British and American English or in French usage, owing to different conceptual frameworks of accounting (M. Saboly, personal communication, June, 2003).

CROSS-CULTURAL FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING AND LEARNING

The second background consideration to recognize when discussing FL reading and SA in the European context is the importance given to FL teaching and learning in the different EU countries. Even within the limited geographic space of Western Europe, what we may call a national culture’s *language consciousness* or *language awareness* will be seen to vary. Although we cannot, of course, assume that any one individual will necessarily reflect his or her country’s language consciousness, such a reflection may be expected from a group of individuals, based on surveys such as the one described below.

In the 1990s—when the SA students in this sample were in secondary school—Herreras (1998a) compared, by country, the average number of languages studied and the number of languages reported to be spoken well enough to engage in conversation. He surveyed a representative sample of 7,600 people between the ages of 15 and 25. A cost-effectiveness ratio, calculated for the number of languages spoken to the number of languages studied, gives the hierarchy shown in Table 1 for those countries involved in the present study.

TABLE 1
Cost-Effectiveness: Ratio of Number of Languages Spoken to Number of Languages Studied by Country

Country	Ratio
Germany	.69
Netherlands	.64
Belgium	.53
France	.52
Spain	.39
Ireland	.39
United Kingdom	.35

General language awareness in Germany has been described as strong (Candelier & Hermann-Brennecke, 1998), with two obligatory languages each studied for 3 to 5 hours per week throughout secondary school (Calvet, 1993). Students are expected to master English and to develop receptive skills in several other languages. At the university level, however, FL training for nonlanguage specialists has been described as too limited in scope (Wentzlaff-Eggebert, 1995), although nationally certified language programs are developing.² In the ERASMUS context, the Germans now offer an increased number of courses taught in English, attesting to the level of their language awareness (Truchot, 2002).

The Dutch also stress FL learning. Three languages are obligatory in school: English, German, and French, with Greek and Latin still being offered. Language teaching has been described as active and student-centered, encouraging learner autonomy and responsibility (Van de Louw, 1998). Discipline-specific language courses for university students, however, are recent, as is the development of language centers, but the Dutch have long offered courses taught in English (Truchot, 2002).

Two thirds of the Dutch-speaking students in our sample were Belgian. With its three official languages, the country is considered to have a strong language consciousness and a strong commitment to FL teaching (Heiderscheidt, 1998; Van de Craen, 1995). Despite regional differences, children study an average of two FLs at school: French or Dutch with English or German. At universities, specialized language institutes set demanding requirements for receptive competencies (reading specialized literature), and student exchange programs such as ERASMUS are strongly encouraged. Economic studies are particularly noted for including a “substantial number of languages [ideally three]” (Van de Craen, 1995).

Language consciousness in France has been described by Calvet (1993) as paradoxical. On the one hand, social consensus favors FL instruction. Two languages are obligatory in secondary school. English dominates, followed by Spanish and German, and then other less widely spoken languages. On the other hand, human and material means are seen to be incoherently and insufficiently invested, with disappointing results. A recently published study assessing competency in English in 15- to 16-year-olds and comparing effectiveness of teaching in eight European countries (Bonnet, 2004) showed French students to be the weakest, and less competent in 2002 than on the preceding assessment in 1996. Proposed explanations focused specifically on issues of language consciousness (national FL policy, teacher training, a model of grammatical perfection, etc.). At the university level, language provision for specialists of other disciplines has been described as an indiscriminate sprinkling of low-status courses, poorly integrated into degrees and too often taught by nonpermanent language teachers (Cabezas Gonzales, 1998; Fraser, 1995). Calvet (1993) explained the French paradox in psychological terms: As speakers of one of the two most widely taught languages in Europe, the French are not reconciled to the notion that their language is no longer the *lingua franca* it once was.

In Spain, language awareness has been characterized by Herreras (1998b) as weak. Until 1997, only one modern language was obligatory throughout secondary school; Spain was the last continental country in the EU to require the study of a second FL, with choice limited by the required study of certain regional languages (Truchot, 2002). FL teaching has traditionally been more philologically than communicatively inspired, and policy concerning teaching and teacher training is not presented as being terribly reflective. Consequently, university students are depicted at low levels of competency, particularly in languages other than English (which surpassed French in the early 1980s as the most widely studied FL). Where language courses exist for non-language majors, they are rarely integrated into curricula or recognized for credit. SA students are thus not generally well prepared for courses taught in a FL, but Bernárdez (1995) pointed out that "the main objective is to enable the students to read the literature of their specialty" (p. 5). The situation is evolving, however; Bonnet (2004) reported that the competency level of 15- to 16-year-old Spanish students of English increased between 1996 and 2002, and language centers are developing (Bernárdez, 1995).

Ireland (accounting for just over 10% of the English-speaking sample), is a bilingual country, but Irish, the official first language, is the L1 for only about 4% of the population. Native speakers of English are required to take Irish throughout school and to pass a university entrance exam in order to enroll in higher education. Although this exam is often resented by many citizens, Regan (1998) felt that awareness of the existence of other languages is at least encouraged. In addition to Irish, secondary students generally take one FL, most often French, and in some cases Latin or Greek. University language teaching has traditionally been philologically inspired, but practically oriented courses are increasingly offered, including double degrees with language and another discipline, notably law and business or economics (Chambers, 1995). Both Regan and Chambers stated that politically languages are taken seriously in Ireland but that means are lacking.

The United Kingdom was described by Akamatsu (1998) and Regan (1998) as monolingual, with just one FL—generally French—obligatory for 5 years in school (see bottom of Table 1). Only 5% to 6% of college preparatory students choose college entrance exams in languages. An explanation is given, as for France, in psychological terms: English is the most widely taught language in Europe, and the current *lingua franca*, so motivation to speak other languages for economic or other reasons is weak (Akamatsu, 1998; Calvet, 1993). University FL teaching has traditionally been geared to language specialists, but language centers are more developed in the United Kingdom than in many of the other European countries, and applied language studies or double degrees with another discipline, particularly with law and business or economics (Quartermaine, 1995), are highly desirable (Akamatsu, 1998). Most of the students in the present study were enrolled in such double majors.

THE PRESENT STUDY

In designing this study in the late 1990s, we sought to meet the inherent challenges of context-of-learning research, which Lazar (2004) only recently spelled out. Most studies in this domain are observational (i.e., not randomized experimental). In order to draw plausible causal inferences, Lazar advocated accumulating "converging evidence, [that is] many observational studies, on different groups, pointing in the same direction" (pp. 336–337), and "adjusting for relevant covariates" (p. 338), controlling for specific

characteristics of background variables to eliminate possibly confounding factors. Also pertinent is the notion of the “average causal effect” (p. 335); given that we cannot determine causality for given individuals, we look at averages over groups of participants belonging to the different categories in question. Finally, the use of control groups is indicated.

First, in line with the first recommendation, we were concerned, even in the late 1990s, by the very limited body of existing research in the SA context. Only Davis and Bistodeau, in 1993, addressed the specific question of FL reading comprehension and strategy use in some form of SA (French graduate students in the United States). Since then, Raymond and Parks (2002), Newman et al. (2002), and particularly Kline (1998) and Dewey (2004) have added converging insights from diverse student samples.

Second, in our first research question concerned with possible differences among national groups in FL reading comprehension and strategic approach, FL competency was considered a covariate (in the same way that Dewey, 2004, checked for significantly different levels of L1 reading skill by comparing FL reading development in different SA contexts). Given the evidence supporting the linguistic threshold hypothesis (Alderson, 1984; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Urquhart & Weir, 1998), which states that FL reading is more a language than a reading problem and thus depends more on sufficient FL competency to allow effective transfer of L1 reading skill to the L2 context, the possibility of different levels of FL competency among groups needed to be checked.³

Lazar’s (2004) third recommendation—the average causal effect, or group, rather than individual, profiles—lies at the heart of the present study, given the ever-increasing numbers of countries and of students per country participating in the ERASMUS scheme. Caution must be exercised, as Parry (1996) pointed out, to avoid a deterministic interpretation of cultural considerations and the ensuing risk that central tendencies in empirical research may favor stereotyping and mask individual variations and evolutions. The risk seemed worth taking, however, in light of the stakes at hand and the paucity of existing research. Furthermore, the five studies most closely related to the present investigation (Davis & Bistodeau, 1993; Dewey, 2004; Kline, 1999; Newman et al., 2002; Raymond & Parks, 2002) were either small-scale or case study protocols based on 4 to 21 SA participants.

Finally, Lazar (2004) advocated comparison with a control group. Such a group of students,

competent in both FL and reading skills, was included to provide a norm-referenced indication of the competency of the experimental group of SA students.

The first research question, then, was: Do FL reading comprehension and strategic approach within specific disciplines differ significantly among national groups at the outset of SA? The dependent variables were reading comprehension and use of reading strategies, measured in terms of the independent variable, national origin, and the covariate, FL competency. Operationally defined in the following Methods section, the construct of FL reading comprehension refers to information extraction from university-level texts within the field of social science. Pugh (1978) termed this *receptive* reading, where the reader seeks to discover accurately, within a reasonable time, what an author aims to convey, organizing and remembering the essence of what is read. By strategic approach, we mean the conscious (or unconscious) use of specific behavioral moves while reading (Cohen, 1998), including the reader’s reactions to text (Urquhart & Weir, 1998). The underlying construct of national origin is the combined picture (Atkinson, 2002) of academic literacy tradition (comprehending vs. reproducing) and what we have called *FL consciousness* (strong to weak). Finally, in this study, the construct of FL competency—seen as the expected concrete translation of a country’s language consciousness—is defined in terms of knowledge and use of grammar, vocabulary, and cohesive devices within the framework of reading.

In the debate on the relative importance of FL competency and L1 reading skill in FL reading, research supports a range of positions (Bernhardt & Kamil, 1995), especially because compensation occurs between the two variables (Stanovich, 1980; Yamashita, 2002). The different pictures presented of cross-cultural academic literacy and FL teaching and learning led us to expect wide variation on both of these independent variables, but we could not intuit whether one would predominate over the other. It was thus hypothesized that students strong on both independent variables—that is, from comprehending backgrounds emphasizing academic reading and with developed FL consciousness—would be stronger FL readers. These stronger students would be the German- and Dutch-speaking students. Conversely, students from reproducing educational cultures with low language consciousness would be weaker FL readers. These weaker students would be the Spanish students, and perhaps, the French. The comprehending tradition and weak

FL profile of the English-speaking students (hereafter referred to as *English-language* whether of British or Irish nationality) would put them in the middle. But in the present study, 70% of the English-language students were enrolled in challenging double major programs of French with law or economics. We therefore considered that, closer to the Germans and the Dutch, they would be stronger FL readers.

The second research question was: Does premobility FL reading competency predict academic success? The students' final average was the dependent variable, analyzed as a function of three independent variables: FL reading comprehension, strategy use, and language competency. The question may seem self-evident, but in the educationally diverse European context, the answer hinges on the extent to which reading plays a part in assessment. That, of course, reflects the approach to studying (comprehending vs. reproducing), and we have seen that reading plays a greater role in the former case. It was thus hypothesized that premobility FL reading might be predictive for the French students abroad in comprehending cultures, but less so (or perhaps not at all) for SA students in the reproducing French context.

METHODS

Participants

The participants, 177 ERASMUS students, in their third or fourth year of university, were beginning either a semester or a year abroad between 1999 and 2001. Of these, 37 French students from the *Université des Sciences Sociales* in Toulouse were to attend host institutions in northern European countries where English was the language of instruction; 57 English-speaking British and Irish students, 32 Spanish-speaking students, 27 German students, and 24 Flemish Belgian and Dutch students were beginning SA at the French university in Toulouse. *FL* thus means English for the group of French students and French for the other four national/linguistic groups. Ninety students were majoring in economics, and 87 in undergraduate law.⁴

This sample was also compared with a control group of 12 native French undergraduates in the same disciplines, identified in the author's doctoral research (Taillefer, 1992), from a randomly selected sample of 144 students from the *Université des Sciences Sociales* in Toulouse. Although limited in number, this group of students was remarkably homogeneous, with no significant dif-

ference occurring between their French L1 and their English FL reading comprehension or strategy use. Nor did their comprehension scores in either language differ from those of bilingual professionals involved in piloting the recall protocol. Their target language performance, while statistically lower than that of the bilingual pilots and a group of 28 anglophone SA students in France involved in the original research design, was significantly better than that of the rest of the original French sample.⁵

Materials

It was challenging on both material and conceptual levels to define operationally the measured variables in the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic European context. Indeed, the paucity of empirical data on SA students is surely due in part to the lack of valid testing materials—standardized or equivalent proficiency tests or certification of FL competency and of reading comprehension across languages. Carrell made this point in 1991 for English and Spanish; in 1999, the situation was no different.⁶

Lacking appropriate cross-language criterion-referenced tools at the time when we undertook the present study, we took the advice of Bernhardt and Kamil (1995) who encouraged research based on norm referencing. This norm-referenced research was possible thanks to the control group of equally expert French L1 and English FL readers described above, using the parallel English- and French-language measures of reading comprehension, strategic approach, and language competency specifically developed by the author (Taillefer, 1992).

Operationally defining the variable representing students' academic results—their final averages—meant taking into consideration the fact that assessment varies across cultures, reflecting different constructs (comprehending vs. reproducing). Similarly, grading itself is conceived in varying manners across Europe, for example, grading "generously" or not, resulting in strongly skewed distributions of grades.⁷ The European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) was developed under the ERASMUS scheme specifically to facilitate cross-cultural interpretation of grades⁸ and proved useful in the present study.

Bearing in mind the preceding observations, the following general precautions were taken in developing the bilingual tests for reading comprehension and FL competency.⁹ Accepted criteria for validity and reliability were respected (Bachman, 1990); cross-linguistic equivalency was

an essential consideration. Thus, documents in both English and French were of similar length¹⁰ and rhetorical construction (including cohesive devices). All tests were piloted up to three times until means and standard deviations showed no significant difference, and were then presented to four adult bilinguals (teachers and other professionals) for final confirmation.

The reading comprehension test consisted of an immediate written recall in the students' respective L1s of one text followed by the recall of a second analogous text (see Appendix A) because two measures were preferred to a single one. Carrell (1991) stressed the importance in bilingual research of using authentic documents, modified as little as possible in order to guarantee equivalence and to control extraneous variables. But culturally (and thus linguistically) differing academic rhetoric, as noted above, posed an inherent problem. We thus chose English texts and their translations, which in previous research (Taillefer, 1992) had significantly distinguished between good and poor French L1 and English FL readers.¹¹ Furthermore, in France it is not rare to encounter English documents translated for use in the social sciences.¹² Translations were done by the author in conjunction with two bilingual francophones. In order to minimize cross-cultural effects of genre, both texts were expository and followed the same rhetorical structure. Similarly, in order to limit possible cultural effects of background knowledge (Carrell, 1984; Urquhart & Weir, 1998), both texts dealt with common themes in the social sciences: aspects of verbal and non-verbal communication. For face validity, the texts were presented as pages copied from a book.

The immediate written recall task in the L1 was believed to be the most informative and least invasive measure of text comprehension (Lee, 1986; Seliger & Shohamy, 1989; Swaffar, Arens, & Byrnes, 1991). It was designed to mirror the essence of what had been read and understood within a limited time—a realistic task in higher education as well as in professional life—while also logistically enabling the testing of a large group of mixed language students. Cross-culturally, the recall protocol also seemed to carry the least bias, given that there was no particular type of question that would be more or less familiar to different groups (essay vs. short answer vs. multiple choice).

The 354 recalls, in English, French, Spanish, Catalan, German, and Dutch, were scored quantitatively for the percentage of idea units recalled.¹³ To this end, Bernhardt (1983) suggested “slashing prose into meaningful seg-

ments . . . primarily consisting of noun, verb and prepositional phrases” (p. 29), and Carrell (1983), “idea units . . . corresponding to either individual . . . sentences, basic semantic propositions, or phrases” (p. 189). Templates for scoring had been prepared in earlier research (Taillefer, 1992) in collaboration with three bilingual English-French teachers, with all decisions discussed until complete agreement was reached. Scoring for the English and French recalls was done by the author, and scoring for the other four languages by the author with a native speaker of each language who was bilingual in either French or English. Again, scoring was discussed until agreement was reached. Credit was given according to gist—semantic content and not linguistic surface structure (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978). No significant difference was found between scores for the two texts read by students in each language, so their mean was calculated as a single comprehension score.

Strategic approach to reading was assessed by a self-report questionnaire (Appendix B) translated into the participants' respective L1s.¹⁴ Developed from similar tools used by Block (1986), Barnett (1988), and Carrell (1989), the questionnaire was designed to offer an immediate retrospective image of the readers' text processing. Like the tests of reading comprehension and language competency, the strategy questionnaire had been piloted with four adult bilinguals and, among students, distinguished significantly different levels of L1 and FL strategy use.¹⁵ Research carried out since the development of this instrument has confirmed the pertinent choice of questions (see Cohen, 1998; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Nassaji, 2003; Urquhart & Weir, 1998). Cohen (1998) also made a case for the validity of larger-scale sampling focused on a specific recent learning event, the most feasible way in the context of the present study to reach a large group of mixed language readers.

Students answered *yes* or *no* to questions covering five categories of general reading strategies, calling on their conscious (or unconscious) use of behavioral moves and their thinking about meaning and about themselves as readers. These categories corresponded to the following “higher-level syntactic and semantic processes” (Nassaji, 2003, p. 261): textual content (Q 1–7), reader response (Q 8–10), concrete techniques (Q 11–17), task perception (Q 18–21), and state of mind while reading (Q 22–24). Eleven questions (Q 25–35) then explored more language-oriented local problem-solving techniques, or “lower-level word recognition and graphophonic processes” (Nassaji, 2003, p. 261).

Scoring the reading strategy questionnaire to obtain an overall strategy use profile, or index, meant considering each particular answer as helping or hindering text processing. Although there is no one right or wrong way for any individual to read any specific text, both earlier and more recent research (Carrell, 1989; Cohen, 1986, 1998; Gaonac'h, 1990; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Lau & Chan, 2003; Sarig, 1987; Urquhart & Weir, 1998) offers a consensus on efficient strategic approaches. A good reader, for example, tends to link information in one part of a text with that in another part and to hypothesize on information to come, whereas a poor reader tends to process text word by word. Any single strategy may also be considered positive or negative, depending on circumstances. Thus, a proficient reader with a high level of comprehension who reports ignoring punctuation reflects efficient automatic cognitive processing (McLeod & McLaughlin, 1986); a poor reader with a low level of comprehension who ignores punctuation is not using an effective means of understanding a complex sentence.

Consequently, students' *yes* or *no* answers were transformed into positive or null values, depending on either a clear-cut consensus in the literature of what constitutes effective reading behavior, as Lau and Chan (2003) suggested, or on the reader's level of comprehension (recall score compared to the control group). A reader with a high comprehension score, for example, who said that he or she ignored punctuation scored 1 point, whereas a reader with a low recall score giving the same negative answer scored 0. Similarly, a reader with a high recall score who reported believing himself or herself an efficient reader earned 1 point; a weak reader replying the same way could be considered unaware and scored 0. Conversely, a negative answer from a good reader was interpreted, as Carrell (1989) suggested, as a lack of confidence and was thus worth 0, whereas a weak reader answering *no* was viewed as realistic and scored 1 point.¹⁶

Finally, with no standardized cross-lingual instrument available, FL competency was measured in English and French by means of the bilingual cloze test (Appendix C) used in the author's previous research (Taillefer, 1992). The English version correlated quite reasonably with the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) Section 2 (Structure and written expression, $r = .68$) and Section 3 (Vocabulary and reading comprehension, $r = .59$). In both English and French, it was sufficiently sensitive to distinguish controls among the 144 students in the original protocol (respectively, $t = 30.27, 19.72, p < .0001$).

Given that the cloze test is used to test both language competency (Alderson 1979, 1980; Kobayashi, 2002) and reading comprehension (Greene, 2001; Greenwald, 1981; Levenston, Nir, & Blum-Kulka, 1984)—and that reading is necessary even to take a cloze test—the just-cited authors have provided insights into constructing tests to meet each purpose. Key considerations are the characteristics of items deleted (syntactic considerations, parts of speech, amount of context necessary, etc.) and scoring criteria (exact word, semantic acceptability, importance of syntax, etc.).

As a measure of FL competency, the cloze exercise aimed to test "lower-order core proficiency" (Alderson, 1979, p. 219), or "local comprehension at the microlinguistic level" (Urquhart & Weir, 1998, p. 157). Thirty gaps pinpointed knowledge of grammar, vocabulary, and cohesive devices, using the *rational* approach described by Levenston, Nir, and Blum-Kulka (1984). This approach meant choosing items according to their linguistic characteristics (syntactic or semotactic, or both, calling on immediate context), their pragmatic nature (calling on general knowledge), or their discursive identity (text-level processing as opposed to sentence-level processing). In both languages for each test, 80% of the blanks were of the linguistic type, beginning after about 50 words and continuing at intervals of approximately 10 words. As suggested by Greenwald (1981), the first letter of each missing word was given as a hint. Correction was based on semantic acceptability, but within reasonable stylistic and grammatical limits, as Alderson (1979) and, more recently, Kobayashi (2002) recommended. The range of acceptable answers was decided with bilingual colleagues.

In order to ensure equivalency among languages, two sections were chosen of an essay originally published in both English and French by its bicultural author (Julien Green). The topic—reflections on language learning from a sociolinguistic perspective—was believed pertinent but not overly familiar to students, to minimize the effect of background knowledge. The two tests in and across each language were of similar length (see note 10) and rhetorical construction and had been previously piloted until no statistical difference remained between languages or sections of the essay.

Procedures

The students were tested at the beginning of their SA period in September and early October, 1999, just before departure for the French

students and upon arrival in France for the other nationalities. Each session took place in a lecture theater and lasted 1½ hours. The entire protocol was presented as part of an international project to identify problems encountered by SA students with the aim of proposing solutions. All instructions were written in the participants' respective L1s;¹⁷ native speakers of all languages were present to check comprehension where necessary. Reading texts and cloze tests were in English for the French students and in French for all the others.

Time limits—an essential factor in distinguishing competency (Pugh, 1978)—were set for the language and recall tasks, and were based on the performance of the expert control group in the earlier use of the protocols. The students began with the FL cloze test (13 minutes) after which they had 8 minutes to read the first text and 15 minutes for recall, followed by the timed reading (8 minutes) and recall (15 minutes) of the second text. Within each target language, half the group received one or the other of the cloze tests in the appropriate FL. For the reading comprehension test, texts were counterbalanced with half of each target language group first reading and recalling text A, then B, and conversely. The students were not permitted to look back at texts during recall to avoid copying, as Barnett (1986) and Urquhart and Weir (1998) suggested. The strategy questionnaire ended the session; the students could take as much time as they wanted and then look back at the texts if so desired.

Analyses

Data consisted of scores for recalls, strategy use, and FL language competency, and the students' academic results. The latter were determined by averaging individual course grades at the end of the SA period. In the ERASMUS program, grades earned abroad are translated into the home university's scale by means of existing conversion tables and the recently developed ECTS scale (see note 8). The SA students in France were thus originally graded on a 20-point scale, like their native French counterparts: 10–12 was a *minimum pass*, 13–14 was *sufficient*, 15–16 was *good*, 17–20 was *very good*. Grades for French students returning from Britain, the Netherlands, and so on, were converted from the foreign scales into the local French scale. All grades in the present case were thus based on the 20-point scale.

All analyses were carried out with Statview for Macintosh at an alpha level of .05. MANCOVA was used to answer the first research question to study the simultaneous effect of continuous and non-

inal independent variables (FL competency, national origin) on two or more possibly correlated continuous dependent variables (recall, strategy use). For the second research question, stepwise multiple regression tested the possible influence of independent variables (recall, general and local strategy use, FL competency) on the dependent variable (final average). Normality of distributions was checked, and residuals in regression analyses were verified for absence of specific shape. Kuder Richardson-21 showed a reasonable degree of reliability on the cloze test ($r = .74$), given the number of points (30).

RESULTS

Table 2 provides descriptive statistics for all variables for SA students by national/linguistic group¹⁸ and by discipline, as well as for the control group of expert FL readers. ERASMUS groups are listed geographically from north to south.

First Research Question

Do FL reading comprehension and strategic approach within specific disciplines differ significantly among national groups at the outset of SA?

MANCOVA results, in Table 3, allow us to determine whether differences appeared among students at the outset of SA in reading comprehension and in total strategy use in light of national/linguistic origin and target language competency.

The first important point is that the covariate, FL competency, nonsignificant in the equation, did not distinguish among ERASMUS groups. This means, as Lazar (2004) suggested, that we may eliminate target language skill, as tested, as a possible explanation for any observed differences; the different FL teaching and learning backgrounds described did not, in this case, appear to be deterministic. Furthermore, no significant difference was found for FL competency between SA students as a group and the expert controls (Student *t*). From a norm-referencing point of view and in line with the linguistic threshold hypothesis, we may imagine that the ERASMUS SA students had a sufficiently high level of FL competency to avoid short circuiting effective FL reading.

National origin (but not discipline)¹⁹ did, however, distinguish among students overall (Wilks's Lambda), as well as separately (ANOVA *F*), on measures of both reading comprehension and total strategy use. Fisher's PLSD univariate test established significant differences between English-language and French students and the

TABLE 2
Mean Score Percentages (and SDs) for Participant Groups

Group	<i>n</i>	% FL Competency	% FL Reading Comprehension	% Total Strategy Use	% General Strategy Use	% Local Strategy Use	Average Grades (/20) ECTS
German	27						
<i>M</i>		59.63	26.38	64.52	68.58	55.68	13.13
<i>SD</i>		(17.96)	(9.96)	(14.10)	(11.12)	(20.65)	(1.87)
							C
Dutch	24						
<i>M</i>		61.39	28.59	66.67	73.02	52.81	14.88
<i>SD</i>		(16.30)	(8.57)	(13.50)	(11.31)	(16.45)	(2.17)
							B
English	57						
<i>M</i>		53.87	40.26	76.99	80.00	70.41	10.63
<i>SD</i>		(15.17)	(12.28)	(11.89)	(11.89)	(19.42)	(2.46)
							E
French	37						
<i>M</i>		55.77	36.57	77.45	80.86	70.03	13.53
<i>SD</i>		(16.10)	(10.39)	(12.12)	(10.09)	(23.16)	(1.77)
							C
Spanish	32						
<i>M</i>		56.25	31.48	71.14	74.17	64.55	13.06
<i>SD</i>		(20.63)	(11.46)	(14.61)	(13.60)	(22.19)	(2.01)
							C
Economics	90						
<i>M</i>		55.73	33.71	71.23	74.42	64.27	12.12
<i>SD</i>		(17.22)	(13.07)	(14.19)	(13.01)	(23.74)	(3.07)
							D
Law	87						
<i>M</i>		57.40	35.00	75.08	79.17	66.17	12.57
<i>SD</i>		(16.74)	(12.25)	(13.24)	(12.16)	(21.69)	(2.89)
							D
Controls	12						
<i>M</i>		66.00	52.00	92.86	90.48	98.49	
<i>SD</i>		(11.57)	(8.46)	(4.13)	(6.50)	(3.54)	

Note. ECTS = European Credit Transfer System.

TABLE 3
MANCOVA for FL Reading Comprehension and Total FL Strategy Use as a Function of FL Competency and National/Linguistic Origin (*N* = 177)

MANCOVA	Wilks's Lambda	<i>df</i>	<i>p</i>
FL Competency	ns		
National/Linguistic Origin	2.98	8	.003
FL Competency * Origin	3.57	8	.001
ANOVA	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	Fisher's PLSD univariate test
FL Reading Comprehension			
National/Linguistic Origin	3.69	.007	English, French > Spanish, Germans, Dutch (<i>p</i> < .05)
FL Competency * Origin	4.25	.003	
Total FL Strategy Use			
National/Linguistic Origin	3.17	.016	English, French > Spanish, Germans, Dutch (<i>p</i> < .05)
FL Competency * Origin	2.79	.028	

other three national/linguistic groups both for comprehension and strategy use.²⁰ Comparison with the control group in this case, however, showed all the groups of ERASMUS students to be significantly weaker readers (overall ANOVA for comprehension, $F = 3.26$, $p = .008$; for total strategy use, $F = 3.0$, $p = .013$). From a norm-referencing perspective, we may wonder whether the ERASMUS students' FL reading skill was, in fact, sufficiently developed at the outset of SA.²¹

MANCOVA also allows us to consider the simultaneous effect of independent variables on the dependent variables. Even if FL competency alone was not a main effect (contributing in its own right), its interaction with national origin distinguished among students overall (Wilks's Lambda), as well as separately (ANOVA F) on measures of both reading comprehension and total strategy use. In other words, the weight of national origin, in itself significant, also varied according to the relative strength of FL competency. Remembering that the construct of national origin is defined as the combined picture of academic literacy tradition and FL consciousness, this finding supports Atkinson's (2002) sociocognitive

view of FL learning taking place both "in the head" and "in the world" (p. 525).

The similar hierarchy among national/linguistic groups on reading comprehension and total strategy use (English-language, French > Spanish, German, Dutch), not surprisingly, translates statistically into a fairly strong correlation ($r = .70$). Other authors (Anderson, 1991, in L2; Lau & Chan, 2003, in L1) have reported similar correlations between the product and the process of reading.

This relationship, along with the significantly different levels of performance among groups, suggested exploring the use of individual general and local strategies further distinguishing one national/linguistic and disciplinary group of readers from another. Results are listed hierarchically by χ^2 in Table 4 for specific general and local strategies, showing significant correlations (r) of specific strategies with FL recall, and indicating, by national/linguistic or disciplinary initials, the groups making particularly positive or negative use of each move (tendencies are shown in parentheses).

Eleven general strategies out of 24 (46%) and 7 local problem-solving moves out of 11 (64%)

TABLE 4
Correlation with Recall Score for Individual Strategy Use and National/Linguistic Groups and Disciplines

Strategy	χ^2*	r^{**} with Recall	+Use	-Use
General Strategies				
Correcting or changing an idea while reading	38.74	.59	F, E	G, (S, D)
Feeling stressed while reading	28.46	.14		G
Trying to remember specific parts of the text	27.68	.19	F	S
Rereading parts of the text	23.67	.16	(G)	S
Reformulating parts of the text	21.64	—		D, G, (EC)
Learn something new	20.50	.44		G, D
Feeling oneself an efficient reader	18.67	.60	E	G, D
Guessing what is coming	12.22	—	D	G
Reacting intellectually	9.85	.15		D
Feeling it necessary to know the pronunciation of every word	9.62	—	S	E, (G)
Trying to push ahead when blocked, going back later	9.34	.16	E	D, S
Local Strategies				
Consciously using punctuation and capital letters	26.70	.63		G, D
Skipping a difficulty if it were felt to be unimportant	17.61	.50		D, (G)
Analyzing a word morphologically	12.38	.65		G, D, S
Analyzing a word grammatically within the sentence	11.35	.66		G, D, S
Translating	10.74	.46	E	G, (D, EC)
Using a unilingual dictionary	10.42	—	(G)	E, (F, D)
Looking for clues in context	9.44	—		D

Note. F = French students; E = English-speaking students; EC = economics students; G = German students; D = Dutch students; S = Spanish students. The behavior of the law students was neither notably positive nor negative. +Use = Positive strategy use; -Use = Negative strategy use.

* $df = 4$; $p < .05$.

** $df = 175$; $p < .05$.

distinguished among national groups (χ^2). Students reported more or less difficulty, with, for example, correcting or changing an idea while reading, reformulating parts of the text, trying to push ahead, or translating when blocked. The greater proportion of local moves and their strong correlation with text recall (high values of r) contrasted with general reading strategies. The latter, however, distinguished more markedly among national/linguistic groups (generally higher values of χ^2). English-language and French readers reported greater positive use of general strategies, while Spanish and especially Dutch-language and German readers consistently reported making less positive use of both general and local reading strategies. Little difference appeared between disciplines.

Second Research Question

Does premobility FL reading competency predict academic success?

The students' academic results at the end of the SA period by national/linguistic origin on the French scale of 20, and as ECTS grades, were displayed in Table 2. ANOVA confirmed, $F = 31.69$, $p < .0001$, what appeared obvious: The grades of Dutch students, nearly reaching *good* (ECTS B) on the French university scale, were significantly higher than those of French, German, and Spanish students, whose grades were just over the *satisfactory* line (ECTS C). All students in these four groups earned significantly better grades than the English-language students (ECTS E), 52.6% of whom failed.

Stepwise multiple regression enabled consideration of the possible influence of reading comprehension, general and local strategy use, and FL competency, as measured at the outset of SA, on academic final results.²² Table 5 reports the significant findings.

There was limited impact of students' FL reading, as measured before beginning SA, on academic results. This finding is seen in the relatively low levels of overall significance (F) of reading comprehension and general strategies, accounted for by the low level of influence (t) of a single independent variable ($\beta r = R^2$)—for only two of the five groups of participants. For the Dutch-language students, FL reading comprehension explained nearly one third of the variance in academic results ($R^2 = .31$); for the German students, positive use of general reading strategies explained one fifth of their grades ($R^2 = .21$). But neither the English-language students' nor the French students' effective reading comprehension and strategy use, nor the Spanish students' weaker performance on both measures influenced academic results, regardless of where they were studying. Target language competency, as measured by the cloze tests, played the only significant, though weak ($R^2 < .10$), role for the English-language students and for the entire group of foreigners studying in France.

DISCUSSION

In answer to the first research question, a clear hierarchy of reading skill emerged according to national/linguistic origin, but not completely in

TABLE 5
Stepwise Multiple Regressions: Academic Results as a Function of FL Reading Comprehension, Positive FL Strategy Use, and FL Competency in National/Linguistic Groups

Group	Significant Variable	Parameter Estimate	βr	t	R^2 (Adjusted R^2)	F	p
Dutch ($n = 24$)	FL Reading Comprehension	.163	.312	2.96	.31 (.276)	8.62	.009
German ($n = 27$)	General Strategies	.231	.207	2.18	.21 (.163)	4.69	.044
English ($n = 57$)	FL Competency	.055	.082	2.12	.08 (.065)	4.66	.035
French ($n = 37$)	<i>ns</i>						
Spanish ($n = 32$)	<i>ns</i>						
Foreigners in France ($n = 140$)	FL Competency	.054	.089	3.38	.09 (.081)	11.99	.001

Note. $df = 1$; $p < .05$.

the order expected. Despite having statistically equivalent levels of FL competency, which were comparable to those of the control group and were thus a theoretical protection against short-circuited FL reading, the five national groups nevertheless began SA with significantly different—more or less competent—levels of FL reading comprehension and strategy use.

How do our findings reflect, on the one hand, the expected performance of the English-language, French, and Spanish students? On the other hand, what may account for the unexpectedly weak showing of the Dutch-language and German students, who were from backgrounds emphasizing academic reading as well as FL competency? Given the interactive effect of national origin and FL competency on comprehension and strategy use (Table 3), and the correlation between the latter two variables ($r = .70$), an interpretative look at the students' reported strategy use by national origin (Table 4) offers insights into their differing recall scores. Whereas correlation does not prove causality, it underscores the links drawn in the research literature between national culture, academic literacy tradition, and FL awareness.

The English-language students, enrolled in double major French with law or economics degrees, were theoretically accustomed to both L1 academic reading and the target language of their discipline. As Table 4 shows, they tended to make good use of correcting or changing an idea while reading in French, pushing ahead when blocked, and translating where necessary. Appropriately, they saw themselves as efficient readers, perhaps benefiting, as Grabe and Stoller (2002) suggested, from well-developed FL metalinguistic and metacognitive awareness. As one English student commented, "It's surprising how much you don't remember when reading in a FL and concentrating on understanding the language and not the text." But at the same time, the FL training of these English-language students may have made them somewhat insecure about the importance of pronunciation while reading and the use of a unilingual dictionary.

The academic literacy profile of the French L1 students was described mainly as reproductive, while presenting some aspects of a comprehending approach. Not surprisingly, these students were best at remembering specific parts of texts, and simultaneously being able to correct or change an idea while reading (a likely indication of an epistemological style encouraging abstract analysis²³). Among the French students, linguistically speaking, poor use of a unilingual dictionary,

a resource that is rarely available in language classrooms and not favored for purchase, may indicate the relatively weak level of national language consciousness.

For the Spanish, from a traditionally reproductive academic culture, not correcting or changing an idea while reading or pushing ahead when blocked may reflect less practice in such strategies in L1 academic reading, with consequently poor transfer to a FL situation. However, poorly remembering and rereading parts of a text in a testing situation may be a reaction to traditional academic culture in post-Franco Spain, particularly among economics students, who represented half of this sample. Similarly, whereas traditionally low FL awareness was no obstacle in a sister Romance language (disregarding the pronunciation of French words), morphological and grammatical difficulties reflect the recent emphasis on learning English rather than French and may point to a relatively narrow idea of FL competency.

The group of Dutch-language students made good use of guessing. But, despite theoretically reasonable L1 reading skill and FL competency, they made poor use of several general strategies and of all of the local problem-solving moves that distinguished among groups. Moreover, they saw themselves as efficient FL readers, feeling that they scored well when in fact they did not perform well on the assessment in this study.

Like the Dutch speakers, the German students presented a paradoxical picture. Culturally described as practiced L1 readers with developed FL awareness, the German students in this study made positive use of rereading in a testing situation, but expressed difficulties with most of the other general strategies. On the more specifically language-oriented local strategies, the Germans reported preferring to use a unilingual dictionary, reflecting their strength as effective language learners. Nevertheless, they made poor use of most local problem-solving moves, and like the Dutch speakers, felt that they were efficient FL readers when, in fact, their comprehension scores were low.

The overall weakness of the German- and Dutch-speaking samples on local strategy use, in line with Parry's (1996) description of FL readers from a linguistically rich environment, suggests a more top-down approach, perhaps less given to metacognitive reflection (Aranda, Birch-Becaas, Bourrouilhou, Lambelin, & Walski, 2001; Grabe & Stoller, 2002). If such is the case, then, as Grabe and Stoller (2002) suggested, bottom-up processing problems specific to pairs of any two languages may have taken their toll in reading rates and

fluency in word processing among the L1 speakers of the European languages involved in the present study (with the exception of Dutch). The relative transparency of orthography (the fact that L1 Romance language speakers will pay greater attention to the ends of words than English speakers) helps or hinders their reading; Spanish is more transparent than German, itself more so than French, which is more transparent than English. The use of translation as a problem-solving strategy may reflect such significantly differing cross-cultural, cross-linguistic approaches. Scoring showed that whereas 89% of the double-major English-language students availed themselves of this problem-solving aid, only 59% of the German and 73% of the Dutch speakers did so.

The poor use of general strategies by both German- and Dutch-speaking students remains difficult to understand. It might be assumed that these students would transfer L1 reading skills more directly than language-oriented local moves, as explained above. This reasoning could suggest a weakness in L1 reading competency for these students (not measured here, as explained in note 3), but given their respective academic literacy traditions, this explanation is doubtful.

Further possible explanations for the German- and Dutch-speaking students' unexpectedly low scores for both comprehension and strategy use may be lack of familiarity with the nature of the texts read. Kaplan (1966, 1995), Ulijn and Salager-Meyer (1998), and Valero-Garcés (1996), along with Swales (1990), related speech communities to discourse communities. It should also be remembered, in fact, that these students were probably reading in a less practiced second (or even third) FL, after English (Berns, 1995; Grabe & Stoller, 2002; Truchot, 2002).

Finally, disciplinary culture, crossing national frontiers, was also of interest. The only statistically significant difference distinguishing law students from their counterparts in economics was the former group's stronger positive use of general strategies (note 19). As evidenced in Taillefer's (in press) study, law is clearly a discipline written as formal text to be read and interpreted, whereas much in economics is expressed mathematically. The necessarily different approaches to reading were reflected in the economics students' relative difficulties in reformulating parts of the text and in translating (see Table 4), two strategies that are less important in mathematically oriented studies, but crucial in law where exactitude of terms and phrases is essential.

In answer to the second research question, the findings for the present study again both contra-

dicted and supported what was expected. Somewhat surprisingly, no causal inference could be drawn from premobility measures of reading comprehension or strategy use for French students attending universities in northern Europe where English was the language of instruction. As was expected, however, this was the result obtained for the entire sample of ERASMUS students in France (remembering that contextual considerations *during* SA were not part of the experimental protocol). Nevertheless, reading comprehension was significant for the Dutch speakers, as was the use of general strategies for the Germans. Overall, then, the predictive power of FL reading on academic success was limited and was shared to some extent with FL competency. Intuitively, the latter is not surprising; statistically, the low level for FL competency reflects its interactive (and not main) effect on reading skill (Table 3) in conjunction with national origin.

What may explain the nonsignificance of reading skill, as measured, for the French students who were studying abroad, in comprehending contexts where English was the language of instruction? These French students, operating in their first (not second or third) FL, were among the best readers and strategists in the sample at the outset of their year abroad, despite being weaker than the control group. But perhaps their FL reading skills were sufficiently well developed to allow them to fit readily into their new academic cultures, much as being above the necessary language threshold enables effective FL reading. This finding clearly raises the question of a criterion-referenced level.

However, the finding that reading skill was not a predictor of academic results for the entire group of foreign students in France lends support to the distinction that has been made between comprehending and reproducing orientations to study, where the latter is typified by limited, formal modes of assessment. Whereas 56% of British law and economics professors reported evaluating students on the basis of term papers, only 4% of their French colleagues did so (Taillefer, in press).

The Spanish students coming to France, remaining in a more reproductive tradition, thus had relatively little adaptation to make, and managed academically in an educational context that was similar to that of their home culture. They were also studying in a sister Romance language, whether French constituted the students' first or second FL.

The English-language students faced a very different challenge in France. Their profile lends further support to the distinction made between

orientations to study and to the probable influence of L1 literacy practices in the FL context. The very poor final grade average for these students, significantly different from that of all the other national groups and independent of their strong showing at the beginning of the year in FL reading, may again be explained by the nature of assessment. In a concurrent study by the author (Taillefer, in press), British professors and students (as compared to the French and the Spanish) reported seeing the strongest relationship between reading and passing courses. At the *Université des Sciences Sociales* in Toulouse, most ERASMUS students choose a mixed palette of courses, but 21 out of the 57 English-language students in this study opted for a set university diploma course that is assessed in a manner recognized in ERASMUS circles as particularly difficult—one single 3-hour written final exam (in French) per course. Rather than favoring critical reading and thinking, this format demands rapid recall reflexes and formal written language competency. Of the 21 students in this diploma course, 15 (71%) failed as opposed to 15 (42%) of the 36 students taking a free selection of courses often assessed by two or more written exams and tests and sometimes an oral exam.²⁴

So the English-language students in the present study, for the most part enrolled in demanding French with law or economics degrees and accustomed to independent research, appear to have been carrying inappropriately loaded traveling “baggage” for SA in France. Were they perhaps indeed reading for their studies (a question this investigation was not designed to explore), but in fact linguistically unable to use this reading to their advantage? If so, the question of a criterion-referenced threshold again arises. If the FL competency of these students, as measured in the context of FL reading comprehension, did not differentiate them from their fellow SA students or from the control group, perhaps their written or oral language production was insufficient to meet French host university assessment demands.

A second explanation for the low grades of the English-language students may simply be their significantly lower average age (ANOVA $F = 24.78$, $p < .0001$: English-language = 20.5 years, Spanish = 21.4, Dutch = 21.8, French = 22.0, German = 23.1). The only effect of this variable occurred on final grades, which increased with age (simple regression $F = 13.15$, $p = .0004$), although the level of variance accounted for was minimal ($R^2 = .07$).

Turning finally to the Dutch-speaking and German students, whose premobility FL reading

skill was a significant predictor of academic success in the primarily reproductive French context, comprehension accounted for nearly a third of the variance in grades for the former, and general strategy use accounted for just over a fifth of the variance for the latter. Despite their similarly weak performance on the reading variables as measured at the outset of SA, both groups earned quite acceptable final grades. Of the 27 German students, 13 took the same set diploma courses as the English speakers, and all of them passed. Did these students with their strong academic literacy and FL backgrounds, similar to those of the English-language sample, in fact engage in active reading during their SA period? If so, could their level of FL productive competency, unlike that of the English speakers, have made it possible for such an academic investment to pay off in high grades?

Clearly, then, the question of causal inference of premobility FL reading skill on academic results means considering many more parameters than were included in the present study. Anderson (1991), for example, attributed success in reading textbook-related materials to “individual learner factors . . . such as level of interest, motivation, learning style, and background” (p. 470). Reading itself, as we have seen, plays a more or less key role in assessment. The literature also suggests many other factors that influence grades in various international learning environments, such as professors’ expectations, teacher–student relationships (Dewey, 2004) in both mass higher education (France) or in more selective systems (Britain, Ireland, the Netherlands, Germany), and honor codes and cheating, not to mention SA students’ level of awareness of or familiarity with such considerations (Kline, 1998).

Limitations

Dewey (2004) appropriately remarked that reading “is a skill area that has been neglected in the research that looks at the effects of context on language learning” (p. 304). Limitations encountered in the present study may explain this neglect. First, from a cross-cultural and cross-linguistic causal perspective, satisfying Lazar’s (2004) recommendation of “average causal effect”—looking at averages of sufficiently large groups to be able to generalize—is challenging. Although normality of distributions was checked, perhaps the unexpected comprehension and strategy use scores of the German and Dutch samples depended on the particular combination of individuals involved, or on their somewhat

smaller size than that of samples from the other national groups. And although the participants in the control group presented a remarkably homogeneous profile, a larger control group would also have been beneficial.

Second, the requirement for accumulating “converging evidence” (Lazar, 2004, p. 336) raises the inherent difficulties of both cultural relativity and contrastive linguistics in testing. The reading comprehension texts in English and in French used in the present study had proved valid in experimental situations with French students, but the discourse might not have been equivalent to readers of different national origins. Similarly, the recall task, a research tool often used in Anglo-Saxon contexts, may have posed problems for some participants who commented that they found it disturbingly unfamiliar. The closed-format strategy questionnaire, purposefully designed to test a large number of participants, might not have sufficiently reflected culturally different manners of text processing. The test of FL competency was designed to measure grammatical and lexical receptive knowledge in English and French, and thus offered no insight into other aspects of FL competency that most likely influenced academic results: listening comprehension, written expression, and speaking skills. Finally, as explained in note 3, no attempt was made in the research design to include a measure of the students’ L1 reading skills, given the impossibility of finding such an equivalent, appropriate, and accessible instrument in six native languages and seven to eight national/regional cultures.

CONCLUSION

In light of our results, the corollary to our research questions—whether students of different national backgrounds undertook SA under equally favorable conditions—cannot be answered definitively. Successfully transferring FL reading skills across cultures clearly amounts to more than just questions of linguistic threshold, linguistic interdependence, or contrastive rhetoric. It implies a much wider social transformation, which Swales (1990) referred to in academic contexts as “the formative influence of the educational environment” (p. 66) and Atkinson (2002) and Ridgway (2003) posited in a wider sociocultural perspective.

But such transformations can only be purposefully addressed in terms of clear expectations—or conscious thresholds of acceptable competencies—and Kline (1998) and others have warned that this kind of linguistic and

cultural information is rarely made explicit.²⁵ It will, one may hope, become more so with greater integration of the Council of Europe’s *Common European Framework of Reference for Language* (2001) which can help institutions establish criterion levels in listening, speaking, reading, and writing, rather than merely relying on norm referencing as is currently done (and, because there was no other option, as was the case in the present study).

The purpose of exploring the FL reading difficulties encountered by SA students in this study was specifically to lessen their “cost of affiliation.” Due to the limitations mentioned, one must guard against overgeneralizing, cultural stereotyping, and determinism. But the following recommendations, which are preventive rather than remedial, can nonetheless be made.

Pedagogical Recommendations

First, pertinent cross-cultural analyses need to pinpoint specific situational traps as Kline (1998) warned, similar to the way management researchers predict professional culture clashes (Hickson & Pugh, 1995; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997). This means understanding both sides of the picture, evaluating and predicting the strengths and weaknesses of outgoing and incoming students in light of both home and host institutional academic and linguistic cultures. Initial questions include: How important is reading to academic success? What kinds of reading foster that success? Are oral and written language competencies and productive and receptive skills equally necessary? Is a country’s native language the language of instruction, or does the international student in fact need two FLs? Will the students be working in a first, second, third, or additional FL?

Addressing the situational traps encountered in the present study, one would thus advise students resembling the English-language sample who came to France to improve their French writing for academic purposes in preparation for formal exams. Note-taking (even dictation) in French would prove helpful to students from northern countries in French canonical lecture courses that are quite different from the less directive, more interactive model they experience at home (Flowerdew & Miller, 1995). The Dutch speakers and the German students certainly earned satisfactory grades in Toulouse, but for them, reading did not play the key role in assessment, and these students performed relatively weakly at the outset in French reading

comprehension and strategy use. One might therefore suggest, in terms of general academic well-being, that learners with such profiles focus on reading skill and metacognitive approach in this (third?) language. Similarly, further development of autonomous reading skills would surely benefit students like those in the Spanish sample—rather average FL readers—bound for northern European countries with comprehending academic cultures, even if the students' first FL is English. Although the French students' FL reading and academic results were certainly adequate, their case nonetheless raises the question of efficiency, an aspect of criterion referencing included in the *Common European Framework*: If the students' language and study skills are reasonable before they leave, how much time will they still need—and have—to be fully operational abroad? How good is good enough?

A second key pedagogical recommendation concerns SA students as individuals facing particular situational traps, and goes beyond Lazar's (2004) average causal effect. Freed, Dewey, Segalowitz, and Halter (2004) developed a standardized questionnaire in the Language Contact Profile "to assess second language contact for students entering and completing language study programs in various contexts of learning" (p. 349). If SA students use such a questionnaire, the background information it provides will clearly help clarify expectations for both students themselves and program administrators.

The final pedagogical recommendation concerns the spirit of institutional language training. In the European context, as explained in the discussion on FL awareness in the different countries in this study, the role of university language centers varies considerably. These centers provide a pedagogical environment that is the only one flexible enough to cater to the individual needs of both outgoing and incoming students in light of premobility levels of FL skills and particular requirements of host institutions, including testing and certification. Greater international collaboration among these language centers is to be encouraged.²⁶

Implications for Further Study

Further research into the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic questions of SA must be seen as a complex balance between a whole and its parts. The interaction of constituent variables needs to be brought to light to deal with real-life settings, but at the same time, factors must be dissociated in order to assess and understand their individual contributions. The present study, in conjunction

with the author's concurrent survey of L1 literacy practices of British, French, and Spanish law and economics students (Taillefer, in press), dealt with some of these questions, but a larger-scale treatment is necessary using criterion-referenced instruments such as DIALANG or BULATS (see note 6). At the same time, further research is also necessary into reading requirements of specific disciplines, based on cross-cultural tests of reading for specific purposes. Longitudinal studies considering performance both before and after SA, using instruments such as Freed et al.'s (2004) Language Contact Profile, as well as during SA (Kline, 1998) will also help satisfy Lazar's (2004) call for accumulating converging evidence. A final avenue to explore is that of self-assessment and its relation to criterion referencing. One of the key objectives of the *European Language Portfolio*, which has been widely piloted and is now being used on a larger scale (within European language centers; see note 26) is to support SA by raising linguistic consciousness and fostering a realistic perception of learners' competencies.

If the internationalization of university studies is to continue developing in quality, it is to be hoped that the question of FL competency in the SA context will draw greater attention from both researchers and policy makers. Reading for academic purposes, whether paper or electronic documents, remains the chief means of gathering information, and as such is a key FL competency. But reading in the SA context automatically calls up challenging cross-linguistic and cross-cultural questions. It is our hope that the profession will meet this double challenge of language and culture and improve SA conditions, thereby favoring equality of opportunity among international students.

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NOTES

¹ Source: Socrates-Leonardo French National Agency (<http://www.socrates-leonardo.fr>).

² See UNICert®, <http://rcswww.urz.tu-dresden.de/~unicert/>.

³ The linguistic interdependence hypothesis would also suggest that the author control for L1 reading competency (and the linguistic threshold hypothesis, that Dewey control for the possible intervening variable of FL competency). Because the author's participants were final-year undergraduates or master's degree students, it was assumed that students at this level of study would be reasonably competent L1 readers, regardless of national culture. (Dewey reported the number of years of previous FL study.) This control may not have been foolproof, of course, as Brown (1988) pointed out in a similar situation; the number of years of language study does not prove the level of language actually learned. In our case, weak L1 readers may well have reached third- or fourth-year university studies.

⁴ Because this was an observational study (i.e., not randomized), it was not possible to balance national/linguistic groups by gender or age. These factors were, however, checked for possible differentiating effects. The former (112 women, 65 men) had no impact; the latter had an effect in only one instance, which will be indicated where pertinent. Discipline had very little impact, and will also be discussed where pertinent.

⁵ ANOVA F for English language competency = 196.29, $p < .0001$: control group ($M = 66.00\%$, $SD = 11.57$) versus bilingual pilot participants and anglophone SA students ($n = 32$, $M = 88.54\%$, $SD = 6.98$) versus the remainder of the French sample ($M = 44.88\%$, $SD = 13.49$).

⁶ Only in recent years have a few tests been developed in several languages based on the six levels of competency described in the Council of Europe's *Common European Framework of Reference for Languages* (2001). DIALANG, a product of the European LINGUA program, tests receptive skills in 14 European languages for no fee on the Internet (<http://www.dialang.org>). BULATS (Business Language Testing Service), a fee-based test approved by the Association of Language Testers in Europe (ALTE), assesses professionally oriented reading, writing, speaking, and listening skills in English, French, Spanish, and German (<http://www.bulats.org>; <http://www.alte.org>).

⁷ When this study was carried out, for example, only 78.3% of third- and fourth-year students with passing averages at the *Université des Sciences Sociales* in Toulouse reached the *minimum pass* grade range, 18% obtained *satisfactory* grades, 3.5% were in the *good* range, and less than 1%, *very good*.

⁸ Based on a normal curve, where grades are translated from one country's scale to that of another by means of letter grades corresponding to percentiles: *A* designates the top 10% of passing grades, *B* the next 25%, *C* the following 30%, *D* the next 25%, *E* the last 10%, and *F* failure.

⁹ See Taillefer (1992), in French, for a complete discussion of criteria considered pertaining to tasks, tests, and texts (validity, reliability, piloting), and shorter descriptions in English in Taillefer (1996) and Taillefer and Pugh (1998).

¹⁰ Reading texts: an average of 608 words for the two texts in English and 684 for the two texts in French, 637 for one text across languages and 655 for the other. Cloze test for FL competency: an average of 363 words for the two texts in English and 355 for the two texts in French, 366 for the first text across languages and 352 for the second.

¹¹ The sample included 24 students, grouped according to high or low L1 reading skill and L2 language competency (hi-hi—the 12 expert controls—and low-low). French L1 reading comprehension: Student $t = 1.98$, $p = .05$. English FL reading comprehension: $t = 10.13$, $p < .0001$.

¹² A questionnaire given to 350 teachers at the *Université des Sciences Sociales* in Toulouse in the late 1990s on the use of FL documents with students, for example, gave a mere 17 affirmative replies, with use reserved for doctoral-level students. French translations of such classics as H. R. Varian's *Intermediate Microeconomics* and H. Mintzberg's *The Nature of Managerial Work* are standard fare.

¹³ Means did not permit qualitative analyses in six languages.

¹⁴ Dutch was an exception because a large enough number of speakers of this language was not expected. These students used the English-language version and were able to ask for clarification in Dutch if they had questions.

¹⁵ In the sample of 12 "hi-hi" and 12 "low-low" students (see note 11), for L1 reading strategies: Student $t = 3.74$, $p = .0011$; for English FL reading strategies: $t = 7.77$, $p < .0001$. See also Taillefer and Pugh (1998).

¹⁶ Questions 7, 8, 9, 10, 21, 26, 31, and 35 were open to such interpretation. In most cases a weak reader who answered *no* scored 0. A full discussion of the decision-making criteria is available in French in Taillefer, 1992, or from the author.

¹⁷ Dutch again constitutes an exception. See note 14.

¹⁸ For the sake of readability, groups will be referred to by language spoken rather than by nationalities (i.e., British and Irish students will be referred to as English, Belgians and Dutch as Dutch, Castilians and Catalans as Spanish). Similarly, *country* or *national origin* are used synonymously, regardless of students' actual citizenship.

¹⁹ The only level on which law students differed significantly from economics students was the positive use of general strategies: Student $t = 2.69$, $p = .0079$.

²⁰ Individual critical differences are available upon request in all cases.

²¹ Given that there is no criterion reference in the literature as to what constitutes a good recall score, the average scores of the bilingual professionals involved in piloting tests are noteworthy: 43.18% in L1, 50% in L2, with no significant difference between languages, or compared to the control group in L1 and L2.

²² Statview (SAS Institute, 1999) warned against inevitable colinearity, or interrelation, when there are several independent variables, and set the acceptable limit at $< .80$. In the present case, correlation between comprehension and general strategies was $r = .56$, between comprehension and local strategies, $r = .68$. The

remaining correlations were also within the acceptable range: comprehension-FL competency, $r = .11$; general strategies-local strategies, $r = .51$; FL competency-general strategies, $r = .08$; FL competency-local strategies, $r = .09$.

²³ Philosophy is a required subject in high school.

²⁴ In comparison, only one French, one German, one Dutch, and two Spanish students had failing averages.

²⁵ Explicitation itself is culturally contexted, as Hall wrote as long ago as 1977.

²⁶ This is the role of the European Confederation of Language Centres in Higher Education (CercleS, <http://www.cercles.org>).

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APPENDIX A

Example from One of the English-Language Reading Texts

A Note on Verbal Taboo

In every language there seem to be certain “unmentionables”—words with strong affective connotations that cannot be used in polite discourse. In English, the first ones to come to mind are words dealing with excretion. We ask restaurant waiters and filling-station attendants where the *lounge* or *restroom* is, although we usually have no intention of lounging or resting. *Powder room* is another euphemism for the same facility, also known as *toilet*, which itself is an earlier euphemism. Indeed it is impossible in polite society to state, without having to resort to baby-talk or medical vocabulary, what a restroom is for. (It is where you go to “wash your hands.”)

Words concerning, or even vaguely suggesting, anatomy and sex have, especially in American culture, remarkable affective connotations. Ladies of the last century could not bring themselves to say *breast* or *leg*—not even of chicken—so that the terms *white meat* and *dark meat* were substituted. It was thought inelegant to speak of *going to bed*, and *to retire* was used instead. In a 1962 presentation of the Rodgers and Hammerstein musical, *Carousel*, before the British Royal Family, “Our hearts are warm, our bellies are full,” was changed to “Our hearts are warm, and we are full.”

Adapted from: *Language in Thought and Action*, by S. I. Hayakawa, 1978, as cited in *Reading Comprehension Course*, by D. Sim and B. Laufer-Dvorkin, 1982, pp. 33–34.

 APPENDIX B
 Strategy Questionnaire (English Version)

CIRCLE Yes or No

During your reading, did you:

- | | | |
|---|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Consciously link information in one sentence with information from the preceding one? | Yes | No |
| 2. "Guess" what was coming? | Yes | No |
| 3. At any point correct or change an idea formed earlier in your reading? | Yes | No |
| 4. Keep ideas in your head while reading? | Yes | No |
| 5. Differentiate important points from details? | Yes | No |
| 6. Identify any organization of ideas? | Yes | No |
| 7. Learn something new? | Yes | No |
| 8. React intellectually to information in the text? (accept, reject, doubt, etc.) | Yes | No |
| 9. Interpret the texts (make inferences, draw conclusions)? | Yes | No |
| 10. React "emotionally" to ideas in the texts? | Yes | No |
| 11. Try to push ahead when blocked by a comprehension difficulty, possibly going back to the problem later? | Yes | No |
| 12. Try to remember specific parts of the texts? | Yes | No |
| 13. Notice the title of the 1st text? | Yes | No |
| If so, when? _____ | | |
| of the 2nd text? | Yes | No |
| If so, when? _____ | | |
| 14. How many times did you read the texts? | | |
| 15. Reread parts of the texts? | Yes | No |
| 16. Reformulate parts of the texts? | Yes | No |
| 17. Check or evaluate your comprehension? | Yes | No |
| 18. Feel that it was necessary to know the pronunciation of each word to understand the texts? | Yes | No |
| 19. Feel it was necessary to understand every word? | Yes | No |
| 20. Aim first for general understanding? | Yes | No |
| 21. Feel you were an efficient reader? | Yes | No |
| 22. How did you feel while reading? | | |
| | Rather
Stressed | Somewhat
Stressed |
| | Normal | Rather
Relaxed |
| | | Completely
at Ease |
| 23. If you had found these texts in an English newspaper, journal, or magazine, would you have read them? | Yes | No Doubt |
| 24. Did they interest you? | Somewhat | Very Much |
| | | Not at All |
| If/When you were blocked, did you: | | |
| 25. Try to guess the meaning of the word or expression? | Yes | No |
| 26. Skip the difficulty in question deciding that it wasn't very important? | Yes | No |
| 27. Compare the word or expression with something similar in your native language? | Yes | No |
| 28. Look for clues in the context? | Yes | No |
| 29. Analyze a word in itself (prefix, root, suffix)? | Yes | No |
| 30. Grammatically analyze a difficulty within the sentence? | Yes | No |
| 31. Consciously use punctuation, capitals? | Yes | No |
| 32. Translate anything? | Yes | No |
| 33. Want to use a bilingual dictionary? | Yes | No |
| 34. a unilingual dictionary? | Yes | No |
| 35. Pronounce the word or the expression? | Yes | No |

APPENDIX C

Example from One of the English Language Cloze Tests

An Experiment in English – 1

One of the most curious consequences of the present state of affairs in Europe is the problem now facing a great many men and women who have been driven from their homes by the invader and have sought refuge in this country. A strange and unforeseen problem: these people have been told b_____ fate that, if they wish to live, they must l_____ English.

At first this would not seem very disturbing. T_____ learn English, well, why not? Millions of foreigners have l_____ English: it isn't anything like a feat, it is s_____ a question of time, patience and hard work. I_____ some of us were told that, owing to almost unimaginable c_____, we had to learn, let's say, Portuguese t_____ go on living, we should no doubt a_____ the bargain; we might even at first think it a l_____ funny, rather exciting, but as time wore on, our opinion o_____ this matter might undergo a change. (from Green, 1985, pp. 154–157)

Language and Education Retracts 2001 Article with Similarity to 1986 *MLJ* Article

In 2003, Tommi Grover, Director, Multilingual Matters, Ltd., and Viv Edwards, Editor of *Language and Education*, informed Sally Magnan, *MLJ* Editor, of considerable similarities between two published papers. The *MLJ* recognizes the outcome of the scrutiny of this similarity by reprinting the following retraction of the *Language and Education* paper. The *MLJ* thanks Tommi Grover and Viv Edwards for the careful handling of this difficult situation.

Editorial Announcement, *Language and Education*, 19(3), 2005, p. 1.

In November 2003 it was brought to our attention that there were considerable points of similarity between 'Language Learning Motivation for the Class of 2002: Why First-year Puerto Rican High School Students Learn English', published in *Language and Education Vol. 15 (4): 269–278 (2001)* and 'Language Learning Motivation: A Descriptive and Causal Analysis' which appeared in *Modern Language Journal 70: 28–35 (1986)*.

The integrity of our journal clearly relies upon the originality of the articles we publish. We immediately contacted the author in question, who informed us that the material was indeed '100% original' and that he would attempt to locate both his original data and the 'the statistician who conducted and wrote up the data analysis'. To date we have not received any such evidence.

We have commissioned two studies comparing the data between the two papers. Both studies expressed doubts that two authors could have produced almost identical findings from different datasets.

We also contacted the Editors and the author of the *Modern Language Journal* paper to inform them that attempts were being made to verify the originality of the paper published in our journal. The *Modern Language Journal* commissioned a further three studies that focused both on textual similarities and similarities in the data, between the papers. The *Modern Language Journal* has requested that we withdraw the editorial support of *Language and Education* for the article in question.

In the absence of any evidence to show that the paper published in *Language and Education* is based on an independently conducted study, and in light of both the textual similarities and the similarities in the data, the Editor and Publishers of *Language and Education*, hereby withdraw this paper. If in the future the author is able to show that the study was indeed independent and is able to explain the textual similarities and lack of proper citation of the *Modern Language Journal* paper, we will subject this evidence to proper scrutiny and, if substantiated, will reinstate the paper.