Second language identity in study abroad narratives

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In this presentation I describe a framework which captures the options available for the design of (1) studies broadly known as narrative inquiry or (2) qualitative studies which incorporate narrative aspects. This framework consists of a series of interconnected continua. Any narrative study can be situated along each of these continua. To exemplify the framework I draw on a large-scale study which examines the influence of study abroad on participants’ second-language identities. Three main dimensions of second language identity are identified, related to (1) identity-related aspects of second language proficiency, (2) linguistic self-concept, or sense of self as a learner and user of the second language, and (3) second language-mediated aspects of personal competence. The study found that most of the students reported developments along all three of these dimensions, although there were variations among individuals that were related both to the duration of the programmes and individual goals and purposes. In this presentation I locate the study along the narrative research continua, describe the research methods in detail, and present selected findings.