

Acquiring a Second Language: Participating in a Language Pledge

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Presented by:

Dawn Gordon

Miranda Roberts

&



B.Z. Toons

by Brian Zaikowski

www.bztoons.com



Sir, I think there is a mistake.
I ordered "Crab-Rangoon."

Session Overview

- What inspired this topic?
- What is a language pledge (and how is it done)
- Supporting research
- Pros and cons of a language pledge
- Student viewpoints
- Professor viewpoints
- “Learning Experience” for the audience

Topic Inspiration

- A passionate professor noticed a common denominator among his students...and he wanted to know the source.
- He hasn't stopped talking about it since his discovery!

Dr. Christopher Lupke, WSU Associate Professor of Chinese Language



What is a Language Pledge?

Simply put:



Available Research

- Little in the way of documented research regarding language gains via a language pledge and gains made by students enrolled in traditional programming.
- Some documentation to support gains made by learning language abroad versus the domestic classroom.
- Logic: If exposure to native speakers abroad results in a broader gain in language skills, required communication in the local language should result in even more successful results.

Available Research

- <http://studyabroadresearch.org/ReferenceList.htm>
- Frontier Journal
- Bringing the professor and students to you

Study from Frontiers

Statistical study of 40 University of Colorado (Boulder) language students

- 20 students remained at home
- 20 studied abroad
 - All students were non-heritage
 - 2 years of study prior to participation.

Study from Frontiers

Testing method

- Baseline testing of both groups prior to departure
- Testing at conclusion of semester
- Testing 13 weeks later

Results in a Nutshell

“...students who spent a semester studying [away] were found to have made greater gains in oral proficiency and in several aspects of oral fluency compared to those who studied at their home university in the United States.”

Advantages of Choosing a Language Pledge Program?

- Forced to avoid the native-tongue comfort-zone

“...recent work has suggested that students are not necessarily “immersed” in the native speech community...that some students do not use the target language as much as has been believed nor do they consistently avail themselves of the numerous opportunities to participate in the native culture as we may have expected.” (Frank, 1997; Pellegrino, 1998; Wilkinson, 1995).

- Broader vocabulary acquisition

Belinda Crowson, WSU Senior, Chinese Language & Speech and Hearing Sciences Student



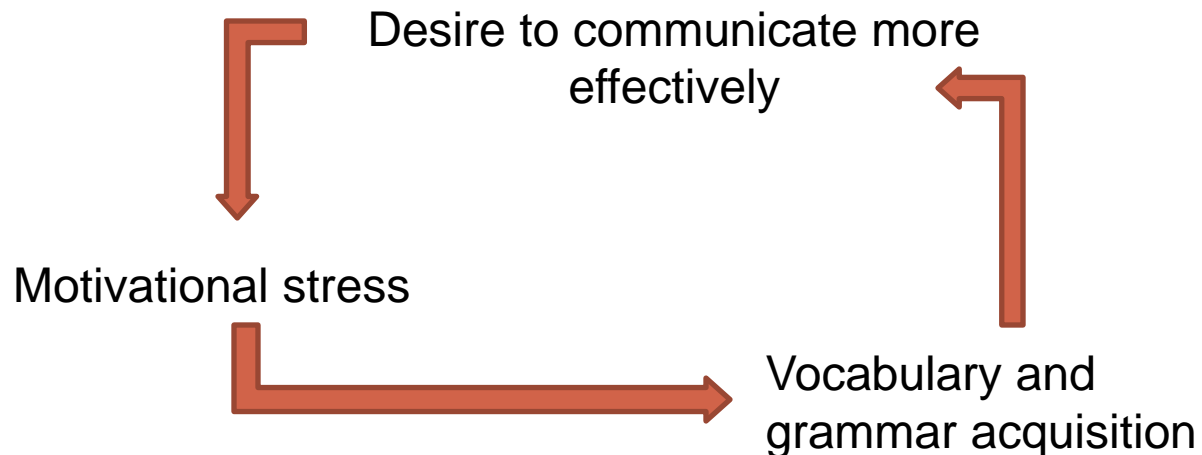
Tim Davis, WSU Senior, Chemical Engineering and Chinese Language Student



The Main Disadvantage of a Language Pledge

The **stress** of limited vocabulary

- Double-edge sword; this stress also serves as a motivator to learn additional vocabulary
- The inability to communicate can often build more stress
- Typically results in a positive cycle of learning



Belinda Crowson, WSU Senior, Chinese Language & Speech and Hearing Sciences Student



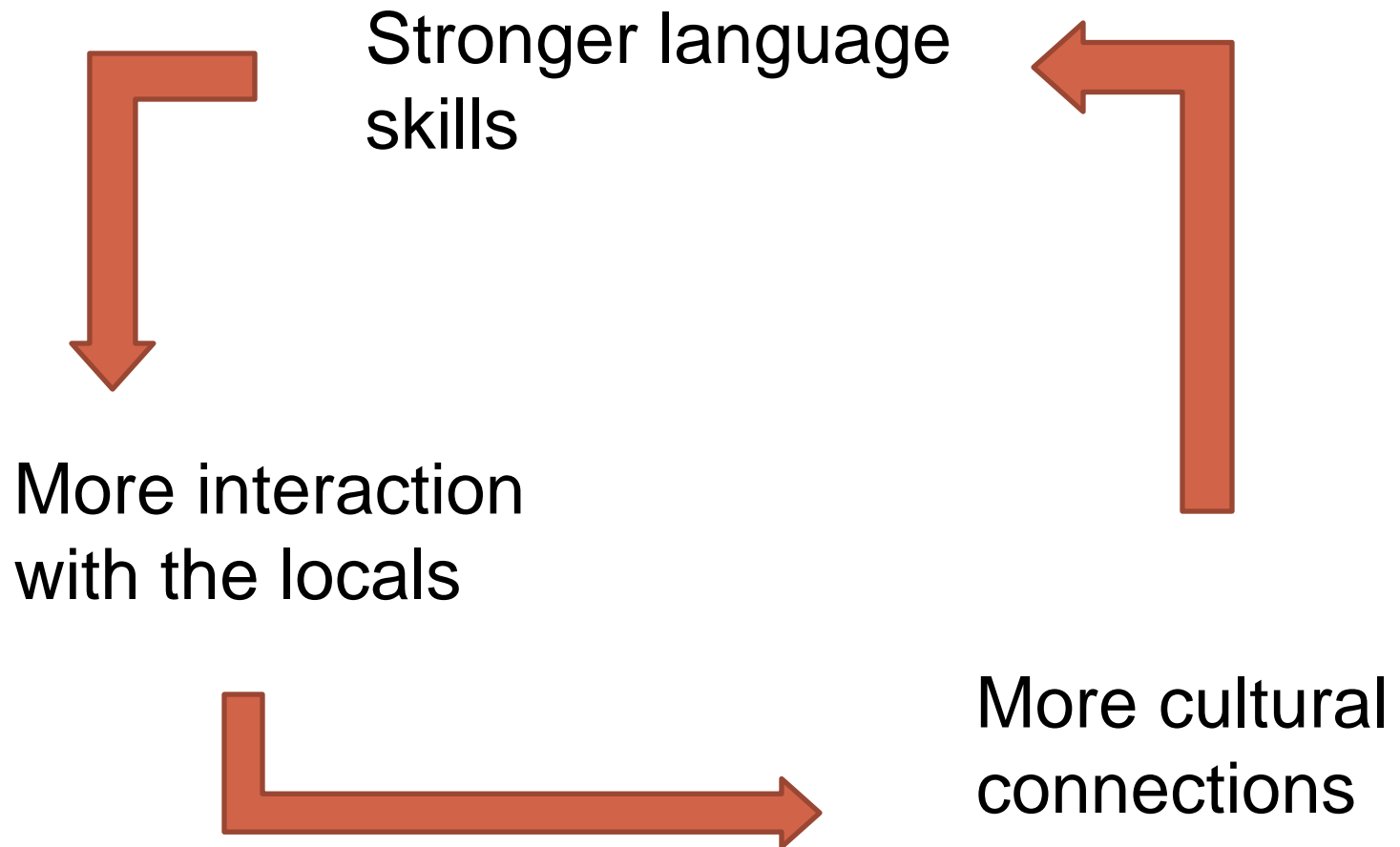
Why does it work?

- Signed contract by local and international participants.
- Turning the act of the pledge into an event.
- Survival lessons
- Living with the locals
- Three times and you're out!

Tim Davis, WSU Senior, Chemical Engineering and Chinese Language Student



Another Positive Cycle



Belinda Crowson, WSU Senior, Chinese Language & Speech and Hearing Sciences Student



Now What?

- Higher language placement at home
- More career opportunities

Tim Davis, WSU Senior, Chemical Engineering and Chinese Language Student



Belinda Crowson, WSU Senior, Chinese Language & Speech and Hearing Sciences Student





Let the Games Begin...

Let's experience what it feels like to adhere
to a language pledge.

Parting Words of Advice from Students Who've “Survived” a Language Pledge Program...



Parting Words of Advice from Students Who've “Survived” a Language Pledge Program...



Open Discussion

