Fri., Jan. 27, 2012
2:00 PM
C312 Wells Hall

All are welcome to attend.
Reception to follow directly after the talk.

Dr. Connor-Linton is an Associate Professor and Chair of the Department of Linguistics at Georgetown University in Washington, DC. He is an expert in multidimensional analysis, language assessment, research design and statistics, and crosscultural communication.

This talk is sponsored by the Department of Linguistics and Germanic, Slavic, Asian, and African Languages in the College of Arts and Letters, Michigan State University, East Lansing, MI.

Study Abroad and Oral Proficiency Development in Less Commonly Taught Languages

Most research on the relationship between study abroad and second language oral proficiency has focused on the most commonly taught languages. The results of the few studies of study abroad and less commonly taught languages are inconclusive, and often contradictory. Given the increasing popularity of study abroad and America’s growing investment in teaching less commonly taught/“strategic” languages, perhaps the more important question is what matches of study abroad program features and language learner characteristics are most strongly related to the development of oral proficiency in these languages.

This paper reports results of a large-scale study of 275 learners of Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Russian from a wide range of American universities. First, pre- and post-tests of oral proficiency of 232 foreign language students who studied abroad were compared with a those of a control group of 43 students who remained on US campuses.

The study then assesses the relationship between oral proficiency gain among language learners studying abroad and (a) characteristics of those learners, including gender, previous language learning, and attitudes toward the study abroad experience, and (b) several characteristics on which study abroad programs vary, including duration of program, language of instruction of non-foreign language courses taken abroad, student housing, and amount of contact with host country nationals.