Firstly, the most obvious and immediate benefit of studying abroad lies in its facilitation in learning a new language. While students should prepare to study abroad by learning a new language in the classroom, thereby establishing a framework for future success, few experiences enhance language learning more than living in a country where it is used. As Kauffman et al. (1992) state, “Foreign settings may offer many new resources for instruction, practice, and evaluation. Teaching methods that take advantage of the local environments can certainly be expected to improve on classroom methods” (p.36). For example, when learning a new language in a classroom, students might practice ordering food at a restaurant or asking directions to a museum, while if studying abroad, they will have the opportunity to put these skills to test in real-world situations. In addition, a comparative study by Jochum (2014) on the oral proficiency level of study-abroad students versus at-home students provides further concrete evidence. In his discussion, Jochum concludes that study-abroad students who had similar proficiency level with at-home students before the study abroad program, demonstrated a much higher proficiency gain than their counterparts. Seventy-eight percent of study-abroad students have improved one proficiency level, while only 44% of at-home students achieved such progress (Jochum, 2014). Evidently, studying abroad provides students genuine and sufficient opportunities to apply language learned in the classroom in real life, which not only facilitates language acquisition but also enlightens students in a broader sense.

Furthermore, another salient benefit of studying abroad program is its contribution to students’ culture awareness. Studying abroad requires students to live and learn in a new culture that is different from their upbringing. In their analysis, Brewer and Cunningham (2009) conclude that real learning is often triggered by a serious dilemma that causes the individuals involved to question assumptions they may have held for their entire lives. When students study abroad, they would often encounter such a challenge when people hold different beliefs, and what they assume to be right remains under question. As Brewer and Cunningham demonstrate, students’ daily assumptions are challenged by the experience of living abroad, from simple concerns such as appropriate breakfast foods to more complex matters such as how societies should be organized and other cultural conventions. When they are shocked by how people in another culture behave and view things differently from their own, students are also given the opportunities to see and experience life in an alternative way. By experiencing a new culture firsthand, they will more deeply appreciate the unique features of both their host and home countries, as well as understand the repercussions of these cultural diversity. As the result, study-abroad students gain a fresh and profound understanding of culture incomparable to mere domestic study.

