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# Addressing the Assumption; A Case Study on Student Motivations and Barriers to Study Second Language Abroad

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ADDRESSING THE ASSUMPTION; A CASE STUDY ON STUDENT  
MOTIVATIONS AND BARRIERS TO STUDY SECOND LANGUAGE  
ABROAD

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IELR 76

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### ABSTRACT

Historically, second language learning and study abroad programming have run in natural conjunction. However, in recent years there has been a slow but steady decline in the number of foreign language students in higher education who are choosing to study abroad to further their second language acquisition. This study explores this topic through a case study at Marquette University, and aims to answer the research question: What are the motivations and barriers of foreign language students to study their second language abroad? Using a student survey and in-person interviews with professionals in the field, data is collected on the most significant student motivators and deterrents to study abroad, and responses are then presented and analyzed for meaning. This data, in turn, helps to inform advising practices for Marquette's education abroad team and concludes with recommendations for further research. With connection to motivational theories such as Self-Determination Theory and the Socio-Educational Model as a conceptual framework, this small study connects theory to data and sheds light on this topic within foreign language in a study abroad context.

## Addressing the Assumption; A Case Study on Student Motivations and Barriers to Study Second Language Abroad

The process of language acquisition is quite incredible. The way in which one learns their first language (L1) has been shown to be universal, however the rate and manner in which one acquires a second language (L2) varies a great deal, and can depend on many different factors and stimuli. One factor that can have an immense impact on one's command of an L2 is international study, specifically in a country in which the L2 is spoken natively (Lightbown, 2013). As stated by researcher Heather Allen (2010), "From the 1960s through the mid-1990s, research on study abroad largely supported the notion that it is an ideal means of learning a foreign language." Because of this, there exists a general assumption that students who study a second language will naturally choose to study abroad where the L2 is spoken. Though contact with and exposure to the L2 can have a profound impact on language learning and global competence, not all students that study a second language choose to participate in study abroad at the university level.

As international education trends continue to change, the number of U.S. students studying a second language, or foreign language students (FLS), who choose to study abroad is on the decline. "Traditionally, U.S. students studied abroad largely to perfect foreign language skills. However, this is no longer the case." (Stein-Smith, 2016). According to the 2017 Open Doors Report, only 7.4% of all U.S. students who studied abroad during the 2015/2016 academic year were in the field of foreign language and international studies, and this is down from the 7.8% that studied abroad in 2013/2014. On a global scale, only a fraction (.25%) of all second language learners travelled abroad to study language in 2014 (ICEF Monitor, 2016). At Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, it's also true that not all second language

learners choose to study abroad, despite the opportunities available to them, or the impact it may have on their learning of the L2. This study will explore the reasons behind those decisions.

An Education Abroad Advisor in the Office of International Education at Marquette University (MU) works with students from many different backgrounds and a wide variety of program majors and interests, including second language. When advising, they try to understand the reason behind a student's decision to study abroad in order to better advise each student and lead them in the right direction. Students motivations for their choice to study abroad have always been of interest to the researcher, and equally as interesting, are the barriers that students face to participate.

Additionally, the number of MU participants that enroll in programs that incorporate a fully immersive second language experience is slight compared to the number of students who elect to enroll in English-centered programs or take only English-taught courses abroad. In fact, in 2017, out of approximately 518 students, 66% (n=340 students) participated in English-centered programs at American institutions abroad or took all their courses in English at an international institution, in comparison to the 9% (n=45 students) who participated in study abroad programs that were fully immersive, with coursework taught in a second language at an international institution. About 25% (n=131 students) of these students participated in programs that provided the opportunity for coursework in a second language, but took all or most of their coursework in English. Furthermore, many Marquette students that study foreign language as a major or minor of study, opt out of study abroad opportunities altogether. FLS at Marquette University have many credit-bearing opportunities available to them that will allow them to apply and improve their second language abroad. It raises the question, why don't all FLS take advantage of these opportunities?



This interest in L2 acquisition has led to an inquiry about the link between language learning and the motivations and barriers to study abroad. Focusing on students enrolled in a foreign language program at MU, this study takes a critical look at undergraduate students' reasons for choosing, or not choosing, to study a foreign language or take courses in an L2 abroad. It addresses the question: what are the motivations and barriers of foreign language students to studying their second language abroad during their time at Marquette University? As mentioned, this study uses students currently enrolled in a L2 program at MU as a case study.

As a conceptual framework of motivational psychology, the Self-Determination Theory put forth by Ryan and Deci (2000) and Robert Gardner's (1985) Socio-Educational Model will be used to support information regarding student learning and motivation for second language acquisition (SLA), adding depth of analysis in how student motivation for learning relates to study abroad experiences. By understanding student motivation, perceived barriers, and trends in language learning in this study abroad context, the information gained can be used to inform future advising practices when working with potential participants.

### **Literature Review**

Though research exists to explain a student's motivation to study second language, in addition to separate research that explores the connection to motivation and study abroad, little to no research has been found combining the two concepts (language learning motivation and study abroad). Most of the research found explores these topics separately.

### **Motivation for Second Language Learning**

Much research has been done on the topics of SLA, motivation of second language learning, and how study abroad experiences affect language learning or SLA. Some of the more

well-known and widely used (and criticized) research in second language acquisition dates to over 30 years ago, though is still relevant and worth summarizing for the purpose of this paper. Stephen Krashen (1987) proposed five hypotheses as a part of his Second Language Acquisition Theory, to explain how and why we acquire language and what factors need to be in place in order for SLA to occur. Included in these hypotheses, and the most relevant and applicable for this study, is The Input Hypothesis, in which one learns language by understanding structures just beyond our current understanding or reach. This concept resembles that of Vygotsky's Cognitive Development Theory of the Zone of Proximal Development, which is the distance between what one actually knows ( $i$ ), and their potential ( $i + 1$ ). Krashen also hypothesized that high levels of motivation and self-confidence with low levels of anxiety encouraged L2 learning (Krashen, 1982). Using his multiple hypothesis of SLA, Krashen attempts to connect theory to practice, which led to applications for classroom learning to guide best pedagogical practices for educators. Though Krashen's work has been criticized in more recent years for being overstated, overly simplified and lacking in evidence, it remains a key foundation in SLA, and is the basis of more current research.

Additional research has come forth to expand upon these foundations of L2 learning, including Rebecca Oxford (1994), who suggests that the current research on motivation is limiting, and there is a need to broaden the definition and understanding of L2 motivation. In addition to internal and external motivations, Oxford argues that the breadth of motivation should include: needs theories (a hierarchy of needs, fear of failure and success), instrumentality theories (finding value in learning and weighing it's worth), equity theories (the input are equal to the outputs gained), and reinforcement theories (intrinsic and extrinsic rewards-widely used by teachers). Oxford also notes the importance of goal-setting as a factor in second language

learning, and provides practical implications for language teachers given this broadened view of motivation and how it can be used to identify students' motivation and encourage learning.

Lastly, more recent research has been done to uncover more information on beliefs about language learning. For example, Elaine Horwitz (1999) studied the cultural and situational influences of students' beliefs about language, and used the *BALLI* (Beliefs About Language Learning Inventory) to examine these differences. Using various cultural groups of students studying different languages, students were asked a series of questions about language learning (*BALLI*). Their responses were then analyzed in an attempt to identify differences and commonalities in beliefs across cultural groups. It was determined that not enough evidence was present to suggest that beliefs about language learning vary by cultural group. In fact, many differences existed within the same cultural group, and similarities in beliefs existed across groups.

### **Motivation for Study Abroad**

There is an abundance of information on students' motivation to study abroad in general. Some scholars, such as Margaret Dufon and Eton Churchill (2006), have found that proficiency in a second language may predict participation in study abroad (as cited in Salisbury, 2008). Mark Salisbury (2008) has published such work on college students' intent to study abroad. He began by examining the benefits of study abroad, noting that "...almost no empirical research has explored the array and potential interaction of factors that affect intent to study abroad" (p. 121). In an attempt to examine various cultural and socio-economic factors that influenced students' intent, this study looked at various groups of students from various backgrounds and cultural groups, and compared these factors against participation in study abroad. It was determined that various cultural and socio-economic factors that are instilled in students before

they come to college have a great impact on their intent to go abroad. For example, Salisbury found that students from lower socio-economic status' or students with less educated parents were much less likely to go abroad in college.

In 2010, Gyan Nyaupane agreed that "...there is limited literature examining the motivations for students to participate in study abroad programs" (p. 2). A small study, looking specifically at college students studying abroad on a short-term summer program attempted to uncover student motivations for going abroad by asking questions about their reasons to participate. In the end, it was determined that in this particular group of college students, there were several common motivational factors. "These include desire for international travel, escape, academic, and social" (Nyaupane, 2010, p. 3). It concluded with discussion of the ways in which this information can be used to more effectively market programs to students to increase participation.

Additional research from Manyu Li (2013) and Philip Anderson (2015) examined the connection between various motivational and personality factors and the intent to study abroad. Li hypothesized that, "...with high desire to study abroad will be higher in achievement motivation, neophilia, migrant personality and desire to help" (p. 75). After surveying 555 students enrolled in a university psychology course, this hypothesis was generally supported across the board. Similarly, Anderson suggested that students' motivation for study abroad will influence their choice of program, and will ultimately affect their level of intercultural competence post-program, stating, "If students find a good match between their study abroad goals and the program they choose, we anticipate that the opportunity for intercultural development is enhanced" (2015, p. 42). In a study that measured student motivations and intercultural competence using the *GPI* (Global Perspective Inventory), Anderson found that

students with higher motivation for world learning and personal growth were more likely to choose a challenging program and homestay, however they did not find significant correlations between motivation and intercultural competence. One limitation could be the reliability of the GPI that was administered, as this can influence or alter the results of such a study.

### **Barriers to Study Abroad**

Research has been done on the type of student that is not going abroad, and why. For example, April Stroud's (2010) research aimed to shed light on the intent to study abroad and the characteristics of those who do and do not intend to participate. She states, "...it is imperative that colleges and universities understand how the characteristics and backgrounds of their students influence intent to study abroad" (p. 491). The study looked at freshman enrollment in a large public university and gathered information on student's demographics, academic program, personal background, and their intent to study abroad. Stroud found that these items do influence a student's intent, noting, "...these researchers found that various forms of capital (financial, human, social, and cultural) gained before college, influence students' predisposition to study abroad" (2010, p. 495).

In 2006, Alan Dessoiff also wrote about students who were not going abroad, noting the lower representation of male students, minority students, and students with disabilities. He added that minority or first-generation students may come from families with different priorities, where study abroad isn't seen as necessary or even seen as a luxury rather than fundamental. According to his research, study abroad participation is also lower among community college students. Director of International Programs at the American Association of Community Colleges, Judith Irwin, noted, "...many community college students also hold down jobs, either full- or part-time, and may have family responsibilities as well, which further limit their opportunities for foreign

study” (as cited in Dessoiff, 2006, p. 24). Dessoiff, among other scholars have found that barriers to participation in study abroad include: “increased costs, lack of awareness, perceived unimportance, complexity of the application and preparation process, social and familial obligations or constraints, inflexibly sequenced curricular requirements, and fear of discrimination or racism abroad” (as cited in Salisbury, 2009).

### **Second Language Learning and Study Abroad**

Many researchers have made the specific connection between L2 acquisition and study abroad opportunities. In 1967, John Carroll studied L2 language proficiencies among senior university students in four languages (Spanish, French, German and Russian). Included in this study, was the correlation between time spent abroad and language proficiency. Carroll found that students who had spent time in a country where their second language was spoken, had greater language proficiencies in their senior year of schooling. In addition, Carroll noted that students enrolled in private universities had more opportunities for travel or study abroad, and therefore had yet higher language proficiency scores than students who had fewer opportunities to travel or study abroad. Krashen also proposed that length of residence (LOR) in another country where the L2 is spoken led to higher levels of language acquisition, suggesting that time abroad has a positive effect on second language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). Similarly, Schumann’s 1986 Acculturation Model aimed to explain how factors of acculturation influence language acquisition. This model predicts that students will learn the L2 to “the degree they acculturate into the target group” (Schumann, 1986). He goes on to explore various studies that aimed to support this model. He also states that motivation plays a part in second language acquisition, and that motivation is specific to students and each situation.

Both Heather Allen (2010) and Christina Isabelli (2006) have published research on foreign language students' motivation to study abroad and their subsequent level of second language acquisition. Isabelli studied how "extralinguistic" factors, such as motivation, attitudes, and social interactions with native speakers can affect acquisition. She found that student motivation was influenced by the "success, or lack thereof, in incorporating themselves into social networks" (p. 255). Allen also suggests that social networks can be used to evaluate L2 development, and examined how learners' attitude, motivation and behavior in the host environment and linked directly to linguistic development. In her study of American students in Buenos Aires, Argentina, the data demonstrated that attitude towards host culture, motivation to learn the L2, and strength of social networks has a large influence on the ultimate level of SLA. A limitation of this study is the small sample size, which is therefore representative of only a few types of students and excludes those of other cultures and backgrounds.

Finally, Todd Hernandez (2010) has published work on how study abroad experiences shape or influence language learning, or language learning in the study abroad context. His research, like few others, examines the relationship between student motivation, interaction with the L2, and second language acquisition. Hernandez questioned whether student motivation would have a positive effect on interaction with a culture and L2, and as a result, whether interaction with the L2 would have a positive impact on SLA overall. To gather data, he studied 20 students enrolled in a semester-long study abroad program in Spain, surveyed their motivations, and L2 level pre- and post- program. In this study, there proved to be positive connections between motivation, interaction with the L2, and L2 improvement. Similarly, Robert DeKeyser (2007), who studied how much second language acquisition is achieved through study abroad experiences, put forth the idea that students who begin at a higher level of language

ability and are more prepared for the experience, may make better progress in their learning through study abroad.

As previously mentioned, there is a substantial amount of research that exists to explore and understand the motivations behind second language acquisition, in addition to motivations behind a student's choice to participate in study abroad. However, there is little no research found that draws a connection between the two topics: foreign language students and their motivations to continue second language acquisition abroad. Hernandez' (2010) work provides the most information on this topic, however it only looked at a small sample size, and did not explore student barriers. Similarly, much information exists on barriers of study abroad in general, however no research was found on barriers to foreign language studying abroad specifically. Therefore, it is the hope that this small study will shed some light on this more specific topic.

## **Research Design & Methodology**

### **Theoretical Frameworks**

Two slightly similar yet equally significant theories on student motivation and second language learning helped to drive the purpose of this study and serve as a conceptual framework for the methodology design. The Socio-Educational Model (SEM) proposed by Robert Gardner and the Self-Determination Theory (SDT) put forth by Richard Ryan and Edward Deci sparked initial interest on the topic of this study, and influenced the questions created for the survey and interviews.

According to Gardner's (1985) SEM, language learning is not just memorizing and practicing vocabulary and grammar structures. There is also "an acculturative aspect" to SLA, in which student motivation includes a positive attitude towards the target language, a general



interest in foreign language, and an *integrative orientation*. Students with an integrative orientation have an “openness (willingness or ability) to take on features of another community”, and will want to integrate and engage with the target language community (Gardner, 2010, p. 3). In other words, general interest in language, a positive attitude toward the target language culture, and openness to engage will affect student motivation to learn a language. Gardner also argued that there are two types of motivation: integrative or instrumental. The former being learning for personal growth and enrichment by engaging with the target language community, and the latter meaning doing something “for immediate or practical use”, such as getting a new job or satisfying a course requirement (Lightbown, 2013). Both of which were found to be instrumental in SLA

Deci and Ryan (2000) proposed the SDT as another way to look at and explain student motivation, and saw it as the relationship between the extrinsic forces, and inherent intrinsic motives. This framework looks at the way in which social environments and external factors influence student attitudes and motivation. They argued that all humans are made to be intrinsically motivated by nature, and we all have inherent, psychological structures of autonomy, competence and relatedness in place. This intrinsic motivation could either be “undermined or enhanced depending on whether the social environment supported or thwarted these needs” (as cited in Van Lange, 2012). In short, extrinsic motivators such as money, success, punishment, feedback, etc. could positively or negatively influence motivation and behavior.

These conceptual frameworks in student motivation triggered interest in both language learning and motivation in a study abroad context, helped to guide the design of this study and

ultimately helped to unearth significance and meaning from the subsequent data in the analysis of the study.

## **Methodology**

This study focused on MU students who are currently enrolled in a foreign language program as a major or minor program of study, or all students who were enrolled in a program through the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures. Including all foreign language students in the study provided the most optimal chance of gathering sufficient data on the motivations and/or barriers to study abroad. This group included: students who have already gone abroad, those who chose not to, and those who have not thus far but plan to do so. All students in this group have MU study abroad opportunities available to them that can incorporate their L2, and all have had equal access to study abroad through the office of International Education at MU.

To obtain more well-rounded conclusions, this study utilized both quantitative data attained through a survey instrument, and qualitative data derived from in-person interviews. First, a survey was created using Qualtrics computer software and sent to all foreign language students, via campus email. The survey included questions created to gather specific information regarding motivations, barriers and choices to study abroad. The student group included freshman, sophomores, juniors and seniors, therefore a variety of data from students in different stages of their higher education was obtained. By sending this survey to all foreign language students, it captured both second language learners who have gone abroad, as well as those who have not. The results of this survey include quantitative data based on the numbers of responses received, and qualitative data that lies within student explanations (See Appendix A).

The second strategy of data acquisition was three individual interviews with administrative staff on the Education Abroad team at MU. Staff members, who work as

Education Abroad Coordinators, were asked to participate in the interview relating directly to the research question. Three staff members agreed to participate, and interviews were scheduled during work hours in the Office of International Education on campus. All interviews were conducted in the same manner, asking questions in the same order and using the same dialogue so as not to skew the results. Participants had the opportunity to deliver detailed responses in this one-on-one format, providing more complete information that perhaps cannot be captured in an electronic survey. Not only does this additional research method (in conjunction with the survey and literature review) triangulate the data in this study to form a well-rounded and informed result, it was also used to achieve a more comprehensive view of FLS motivations and deterrents within a study abroad context by adding insight from professionals in the field. This adds depth to the research as a result (See Appendix B).

Data was then reviewed and analyzed for commonalities and trends. The survey results were available in Qualtrics and trends could be identified through the Reports section of the software. Any short answer responses were exported into an Excel file, and the data was then reviewed and sorted into categories or converted into a statistic, such as percentages. The interview data was transcribed and then reviewed and analyzed by the researcher. Similar to the survey results, it was analyzed for trends, commonalities and interesting ideas or thoughts that addressed the research question.

### **Sampling and Data Collection**

Participants were chosen for the survey based on their area of study. All Marquette students who are currently enrolled in a foreign language program as a major or minor program of study, or all students who were enrolled in a program through the Department of Foreign Languages and Literatures received the survey instrument via campus email, which ensured that

this captured all MU students currently studying a second language. The survey was sent to a total of 443 students on March 26, 2018, and it remained open until April 1, 2018. Survey results were sent automatically to the researcher's Qualtrics account where all responses were collected and stored. Interview participants, on the other hand, were chosen based on their professional role and access to both foreign language students and study abroad programming at Marquette. This included five individuals, three of which were available for interviews. All interviews were recorded and then transcribed using a transcribing software, to capture all participant responses.

### **Ethics in Research and Researcher's Positionality**

The researcher works directly with undergraduate foreign language students regularly, as an Advisor for study abroad programming at MU. It is possible, therefore, that the researcher had met personally with some of the foreign language students included in the survey prior to completing the survey, for study abroad advising or a study abroad 101 session. It is unlikely, however, that having met the researcher would sway or influence student responses in any way, as none of the survey questions were identifying and could not be traced back to any one student. The researcher also works directly with all three interview participants in the same department within the university. For this reason, interviews were structured identically, and interview questions were kept consistent with little additional dialogue from the researcher to avoid any bias or influence on responses. The purpose of the interview questions was to gain insight on the participants' understanding or experience working with foreign language students in a study abroad context, and inform this study through their individual perspective.

Foreign language students were provided with an introduction of the survey in the body of the email, and were provided with a link to the survey site (see Appendix A). Prior to receiving the first survey question, students were shown an informed consent and asked if they

agreed to continue. If they chose to agree, they were taken to the first question of the survey, and if not, the survey ended and they were not given any additional questions (See Appendix A).

Interview participants were provided with a written informed consent, and were asked to sign if they agreed to allow their session to be recorded, their responses quoted in the findings, and their professional titles to be used (See Appendix B).

The Qualtrics account used to collect survey data was created by the researcher, and is password protected. No other colleagues or acquaintances have access to this password. Completed survey results were routed back to Qualtrics and collected for the researcher's use. No identifiable information was collected from survey participants; however, interview participants were asked to provide their professional titles. Because the Education Abroad team is relatively small, it is possible that participants could be identified based on their role within the department. The researcher asked the same questions to each interview participant in the same order, and did not ask additional, leading questions to any participant. Neither the survey nor interview participant group are considered to be vulnerable populations, and approval was received by two separate Institutional Review Boards (IRB) to conduct these research methods.

### **Limitations**

It's necessary to acknowledge the various limitations of this study to increase understanding and interpretation of the results. Some of these limitations are specific to the survey participants. First, this study is focused specifically on FLS, therefore, it does not consider one's race, gender or cultural background. Consequently, it cannot be determined if student motivations and barriers are related to any of these factors or if they are rooted in these factors in any way. Secondly, this group is comprised of only 443 FLS, and represents only a fraction of the FLS across the United States. Therefore, the results do not represent the

motivations and barriers of all undergraduate American students and cannot be generalized to all FLS in all regions of the country. Third, this group of survey students and interview participants are all from Marquette University, reflecting a limited point of view. This Catholic, Jesuit university has a strong focus on student academic success and holds students high academic and religious standards. Because this university attracts and admits students who meet certain requirements, this might produce results that are specific to the Marquette student. In other words, the results of this study may have been different if they were obtained from a public university with different admission requirements.

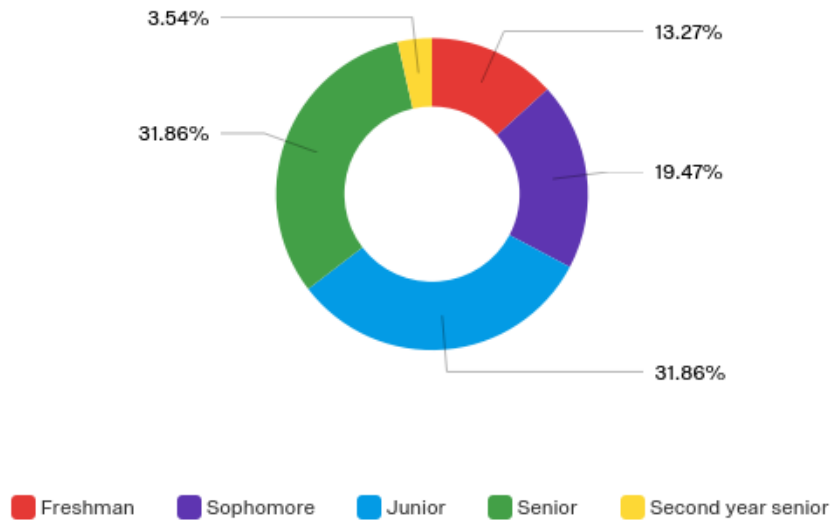
Additionally, interview participants may have had different responses, experiences, or perspectives if they worked at a different university or in a different part of the country. This study includes only three professionals whose experience with FLS is primarily from the mid-west region of the U.S., and cannot be generalized to the views of professionals that work with FLS in other areas of the country where the culture, needs, and norms may be vastly different. Furthermore, this survey was only made available to student participants for seven days, therefore the responses of the students who did not have the opportunity to complete the survey in this timeframe are not captured in these results. Also, the data gathered from the survey is from students who check their email regularly, opted to complete the survey, and were willing to share their responses. Therefore, the survey only captures the responses of these students, and not the students who opted out of the survey for any reason. Furthermore, the survey itself allows for some short answers and explanation, but the answers may not include the full story of each student. Participants may have more information to share that would better inform the study, but did not have the space or time to thoughtfully share it.

An additional limitation of this study could be the accuracy of the data itself. It is assumed that students reported information that they believed to be true, and student responses reflected their perceptions at the time of data collection. However, it's possible that some responses could be inaccurate. For example, students who have not yet studied abroad may have an understanding of their motivations or barriers currently, however these may change as these participants grow personally, advance in their education, and get closer to a study abroad experience. A student who has already studied abroad, on the other hand, may have an idea of their motivations to do so, however these motivations may have changed over time, and may not be the same motivations that the student was feeling prior to their experience. Their motivation could have evolved from an instrumental motivation to an integrative motivation with time, for example. It is also possible, that participants may report specific answers that they believe the researcher will want to hear. One might state that their biggest motivation was SLA, however in reality, they mostly wanted to travel Europe but may not choose to disclose this information.

### **Presentation of Data**

#### **Survey Results**

The student survey, which was sent to 443 students via email through Qualtrics, received 114 total responses. 113 of these students chose to accept and agree to the informed consent continuing to the survey, and one student chose not to accept and therefore did not complete the full survey. This equates to a 25.5% completion rate. An equal number of juniors and seniors completed the survey, both at 31.86% (n=36 responses) of the total amount of respondents. The next highest group of respondents was sophomores at 19.47% (n=22 responses) of the total, then freshman at 13.27% (n=15 responses), and lastly second-year seniors at 3.54% (n=4 responses) of the total group (See Figure 1).



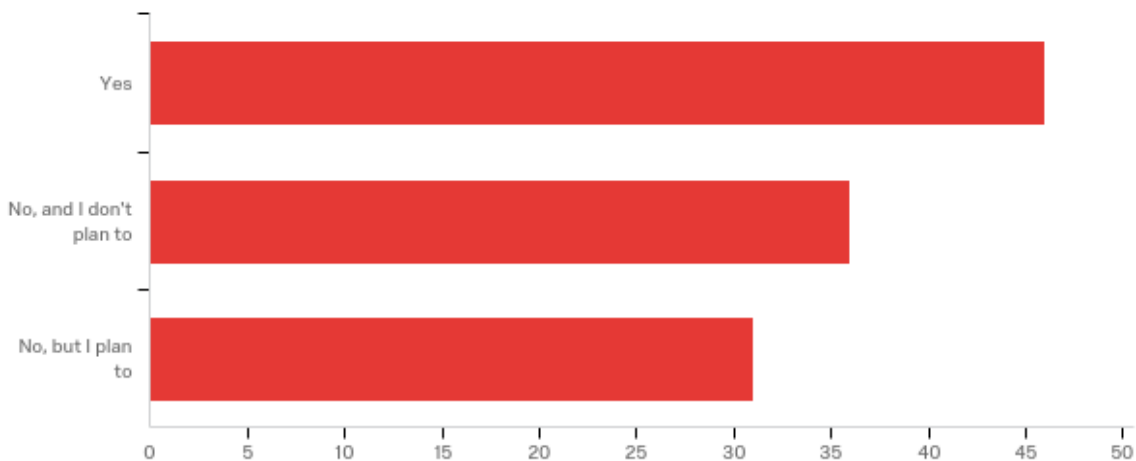
**Figure 1: Foreign language study body represented in survey results**

Though all students who completed the survey were enrolled in a foreign language program at MU in some capacity, there were several different combinations of programs of study, as well as different languages represented. Of the 113 total participants, 111 participants provided information about their program of study. Altogether, students reported studying a total of five languages including: Spanish, French, German, Italian and Arabic. At MU, Spanish, French and German are available as major programs of study, and Arabic studies is available as a minor of study. Italian courses are offered as a means to satisfy a foreign language requirement or as electives. Most students also reported additional subjects outside of foreign language as their major or minor of study, such as finance, biomedical science, public relations or mechanical engineering, to name a few. These academic subjects have been categorized into five major groups: health sciences, arts and sciences/education, business, communication and STEM. Overall, there were 41 students studying health sciences, 35 in arts and sciences/education, 22 in business, 7 studying communication, and 5 students in STEM. With regard to foreign language,



73 students reported studying foreign language as a minor (61 Spanish, 4 French, 2 German, 3 Arabic, 1 Classical Languages) and 11 students reported foreign language as their major (6 Spanish, 4 French, 1 German). It couldn't be determined if foreign language was the major or minor for 26 of these students.

One of the most fundamental pieces of data gathered was the number of FLS participants who had participated in study abroad. Of the 113 participants who completed the survey, 46 had already studied abroad, 31 had not yet but planned to, and 36 students did not participate in study abroad and had no plans to do so (See Figure 2). From this data, it can be projected that of all the FLS at Marquette who completed the survey, only 68% (n=77 students) will study abroad before graduation.



**Figure 2: Number of participants that have or have not studied abroad**

Participants were also asked in which study abroad program they participated, and respondents reported to have studied in eleven different countries including: Spain, Ireland, Argentina, France, Chile, Italy, Peru, Bolivia, Finland, England, and Morocco. This included a mix of program types including: American institutions abroad, international institutions that offer

most coursework in their native language, international institutions that offer most coursework in English, semester-long, short-term, and faculty-led programs.

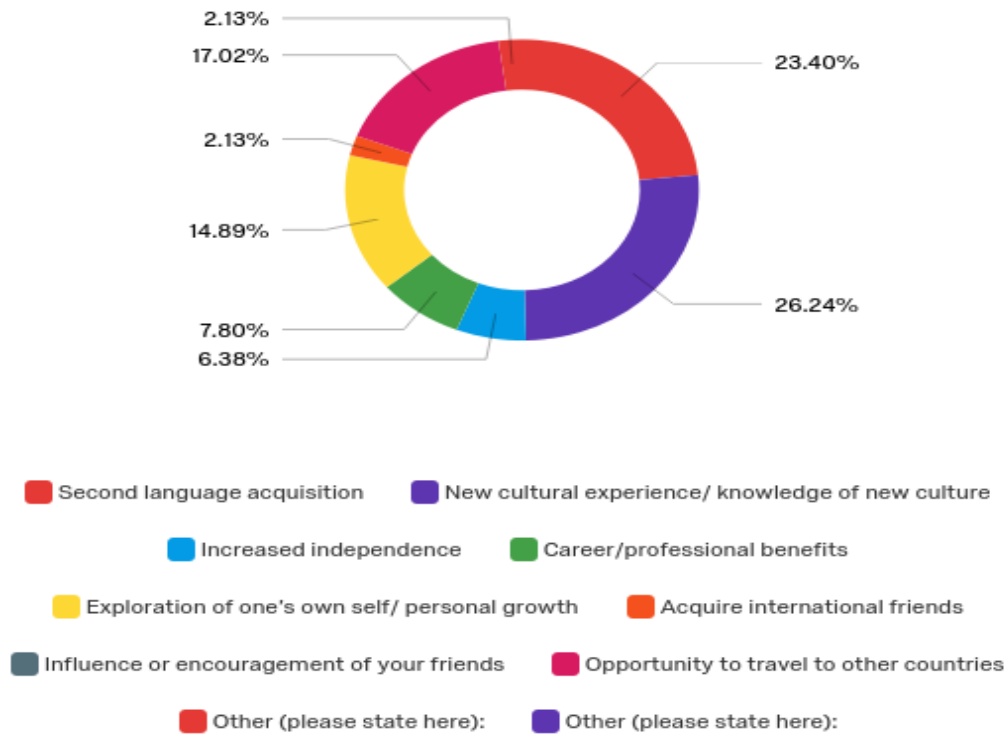
In addition to their program of choice, students who had already studied abroad were asked to disclose if they studied their second language, or took courses taught in a second language while abroad. Of the 46 FLS respondents that had already studied abroad, 44 students indicated that they did take courses in their second language while abroad, which equates to almost this entire group. Seven of the total respondents indicated that they did not take courses in a second language while abroad. It can be assumed here that some students indicated both “yes” and “no” on this question, since the respondent numbers add up to more than the total of 46 students. Of the students who did not take a course in their second language abroad, their reasons for choosing not to included: courses in a foreign language were not offered, some classes were taught in English in addition to the native language and they took advantage of those, concern that they would not comprehend the material and it would affect their understanding of the subject, and one student indicated that they were already sufficiently proficient in their second language so instead they chose to choose a country that they have always wanted to travel to.

Students who plan to study abroad were also asked if they plan to take their courses in a foreign language while abroad. Of this group of 31 students, 23 students stated “yes”, five students indicated “maybe” and only three participants stated they do not plan to take courses in their second language. Of the three students, their reasoning for not planning to take courses in their second language included: not good enough grades, they had already met their foreign language requirements, it would be a struggle for them, and they plan to do a short-term program where foreign language is not offered.

## Motivations

To obtain data that would help to directly inform the research question, both the students who had already studied abroad (Group A), and those who plan to study abroad (Group B) were asked about their motivations to do so. The survey instrument offered a list of motivation options that participants could choose from, and gave the option for the student to choose “other” and provide their own response (See Appendix A). Students in Group A were asked to choose their top three motivations for choosing to enroll in their program, therefore, the result of this question reflect the total of 46 students’ top three choices (See Figure 3 for motivation results). The top motivation reported by Group A, indicated by 26.24% (n=37 responses) of respondents was “New cultural experience/knowledge of a new culture.” The second highest reported motivation was “Second language acquisition,” and the third most reported motivation was the “Opportunities to travel to other countries.” A close fourth was the “Exploration of one’s self/personal growth,” which is worth mentioning for the purpose of this study as it was reported by a significant amount of FLS respondents.

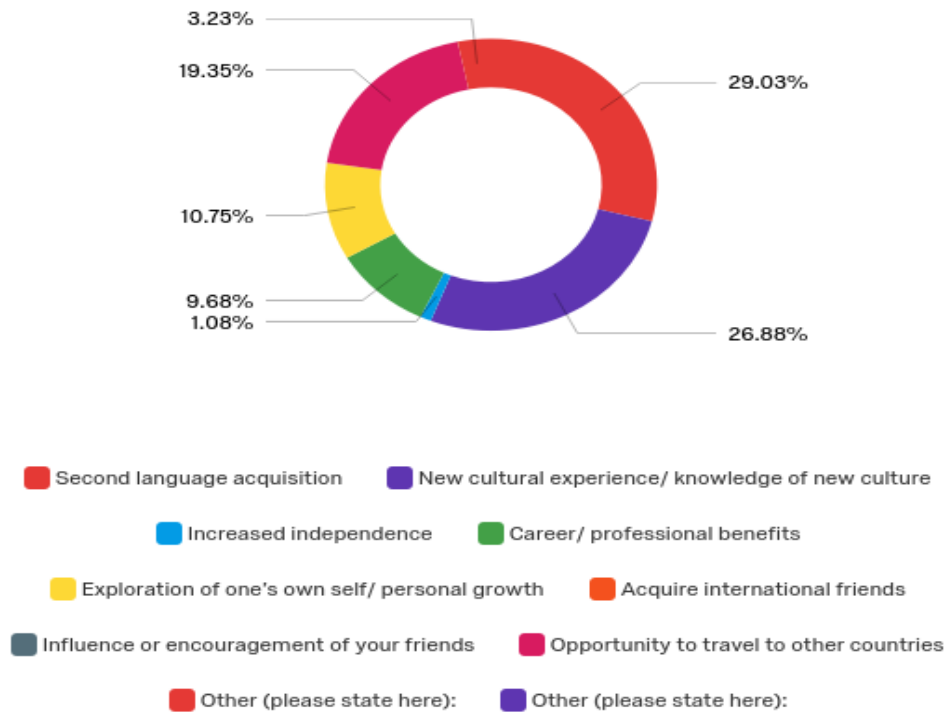
Students in Group A were also asked to specify their biggest motivator for going abroad, out of the three that they had already chosen. Students provided various answers to this question, and these responses have been grouped into four categories: cultural exploration, language acquisition, personal growth, and travel. Twenty one of these 46 students reported language acquisition as their number one motivator, 15 students reported cultural exploration, five students reported personal growth, and five reported travel. Three students reported two different motivators as their biggest, therefore their answers were counted twice in this area.



**Figure 3: Students' motivations for having chosen to study abroad**

The same questions were posed to students in Group B, those who had not yet studied abroad, but planned to in the future: what are three motivations for choosing to study abroad, and what is the biggest? Of the 31 students in Group B, the majority stated that one of their motivators was “Second language acquisition”. This was followed by, “New cultural experience” and “Opportunity to travel to other countries” (See Figure 4). In response to the question about their biggest motivator, student responses were varied, as they were with Group A. Group B’s responses were separated this time into five categories based on responses, and the number of respondents in each category were as follows: 11 students reported language acquisition, eight reported cultural exploration, five reported travel, three reported personal growth, and three

reported professional reasons. One student reported a response that that fell into two of these categories, and therefore is reflected twice here.

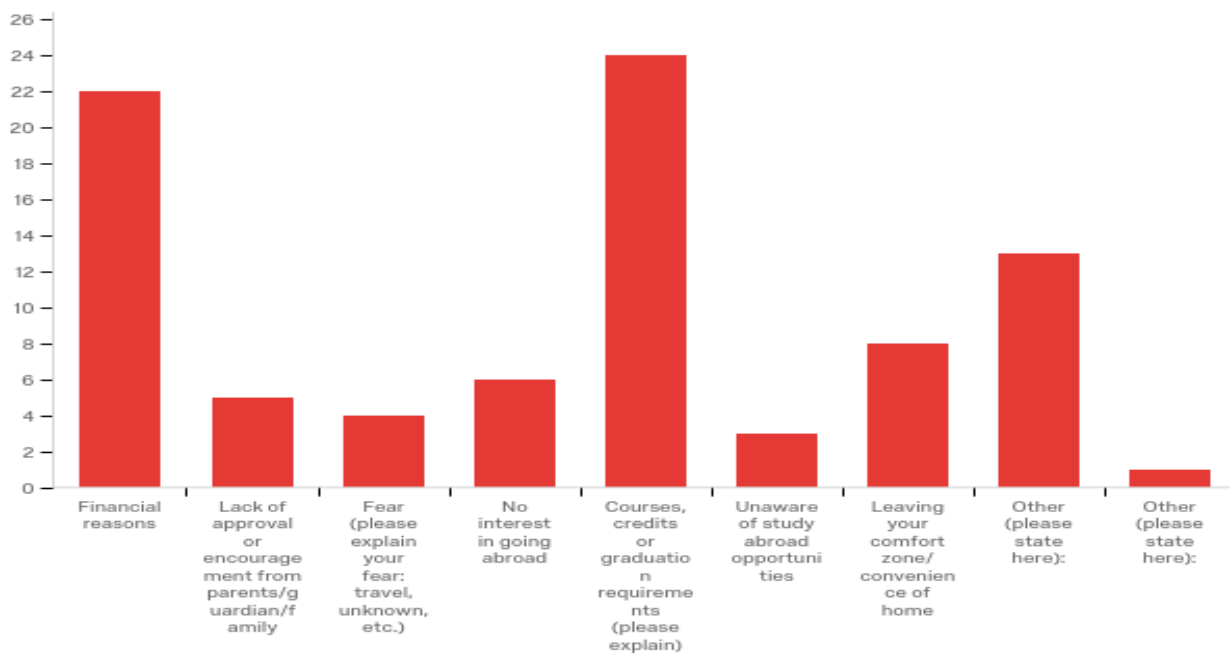


**Figure 4: Students’ motivations for planning to study abroad**

**Barriers**

The group of students who have not studied abroad and do not plan to (Group C) were asked about their top three perceived barriers. The most frequently reported barrier was “Courses, credits or graduation requirements,” with 27.91% (n=24 responses) of students reporting this as a barrier for them. This particular response also prompted students to explain their answer for more clarification. Student provided various explanations for this barrier including: “Unable to take science course abroad at specific Spanish locations,” “There weren’t enough classes offered abroad that matched the requirements I still needed to fulfill,” “It would

be more difficult to study biomedical sciences abroad,” “Those courses aren't offered abroad,” and “Major doesn't have flexibility.” Following this reported barrier was “Financial reasons” at 25.58% (n=22 responses), and the third highest reported barrier was “Other” at 16.28% (n=14 responses), which students were asked to explain. Students who reported “Other” gave such responses as: not having enough time, other obligations at home or on campus, already having international travel experience, limited options, etc. Some students provided explanations that related to their major, required courses or credits, and therefore these responses would fall under the first category: “Courses, credits and graduation requirements” (See Figure 5 for reported barriers).



**Figure 5: Student barriers to study abroad**

Group C was then asked to report their biggest barrier out of each option listed. This answer received 35 responses, out of the 36 students in Group C. The most reported perceived barrier was reasons related to coursework (such as lack of course options abroad, not having time

in their schedule, etc.) with 11 students. Nine students reported finances as a barrier, and six students reported some type of fear, including: leaving the conveniences of home, being away from home, not understanding the language, and not knowing anyone. The last few responses were varied and included: lack of interest, lack of options, lack of approval from family, and having other obligations on campus such as work or paid housing.

Lastly, Group C was asked about their plans for the future with regard to their second language. They were first asked if they planned to use their second language in their professional career in some capacity. Thirty students reported “Yes”, and six reported “No”. Additionally, they were asked if they planned to go abroad after they graduate college to use their second language. Thirty students reported “Yes” and five reported “No”.

### **Interview Results**

In an effort to supplement the data gathered directly from FLS in the survey responses, one-on-one interviews conducted with Education Abroad Coordinators at MU helped to gather more insight into these perceived motivations and barriers from a professional point of view, and outside perspective. Interviewees were asked eight questions regarding their experience and what they have found to be true in working with FLS (See Appendix C). For confidentiality purposes, interviewees have been labeled Coordinator 1, Coordinator 2, and Coordinator 3.

### **Motivations from Advising Perspective**

All three interviewees agreed that the type and degree of motivation depends on the student and their program of study. For example, some FLS are interested in full cultural and linguistic immersion and want to focus solely on SLA. However, this student is the exception and not the rule in their experience. Coordinator 1 noted:

The Spanish literature and culture majors I think are a very different breed than your Spanish for the professions, that are using it for a particular skill set. I feel like it's very different when it's a practical skill they're trying to apply. (personal communication, March 19, 2018).

She added, “Some students go primarily for language, but that’s maybe 10-15%. For most students, language is an added bonus or an “and”, but not the primary reason.” Coordinator 3 also mentioned the importance of practicality for some students, noting that students studying health or business may need to use the language with future patients or clients, and students majoring in foreign language may want to teach it. He added, “Their major motivation for study abroad is so that they can get to a level of fluency that that really matters for them” (personal communication, March 20, 2018). Coordinator 2 agreed that few students are driven solely by SLA, and it’s uncommon to find students that are interested in pursuing non-traditional locations such as Asia, the Middle East or Latin America to study language.

Many students, in Coordinator 2’s experience, are driven by location; western Europe in particular. In fact, two of the three interviewees mentioned the importance of location for students over factors such as cultural exploration and SLA or language immersion. When referring to students who are motivated mainly by language and culture she stated, “They are going to be the ones that are driven by things that are not location-specific. They are okay with the fact that they’re going to Jordan, because they want Arabic” (personal communication, March 19, 2018). In other words, students who are driven by location, such as western Europe, will prioritize that factor above what will be a better fit in terms of SLA. Coordinator 2 added to this point stating, “The location and language go hand-in-hand, whereas the student who seems



to want to go to Europe, the language and the location don't necessarily seem to go hand-in-hand" (personal communication, March 19, 2018).

### **Barriers from Advising Perspective**

Interviewees then discussed perceived barriers for FLS in study abroad, through their experience. One barrier that all three participants discussed and agreed upon was the difficulty in finding and obtaining course requirements abroad. Coordinator 1 stated this in simple terms; "I think the barrier is academic alignment" (personal communication, March 19, 2018).

Coordinator 2 also agreed that fulfilling course requirements can be challenging for many students, which prevents them from committing to a program after their application process. She noted that students only have two or three options through which they can obtain foreign language course requirements easily, which are mostly through American institutions that are located abroad. She added that at other, native institution options which may have more language immersion opportunities: "students might be able to go, but the courses are not evaluated in their favor." When speaking on the same topic of American institutions versus international institutions, Coordinator 2 discussed the challenge of getting courses approved by Marquette's foreign language department for credit, noting, "The Spanish language department believes that the courses at certain institutions are just not equivalent to Marquette courses" (personal communication, March 19, 2018). Therefore, students are deterred from applying to these programs because the course will not transfer or count toward graduation requirements. Coordinator 2 added that some faculty members or academic advisors will recommend American institutions abroad over international or native institutions because Marquette accepts their courses as foreign language credits.

Two interviewees acknowledged the extra work that can sometimes deter students from participating. Coordinator 3, who works primarily with business students who are minoring in foreign language stated, “The biggest issue with business students at Marquette is if they're studying a second language they always have way too much on their plate” and added, “It's a lot of extra credits for these students that, usually in *COBA* (College of Business Administration), have double majors already” (personal communication, March 20, 2018). Similarly, Coordinator 2, who works primarily with students in Arts & Sciences, discussed the extra fluency or foreign language credit needed to study abroad at many institutions that offer opportunity for language immersion. Students need a certain level of fluency to apply, meaning they already need many semesters of FL completed in order to be eligible for certain programs. Coordinator 2 added, “A lot of times we say if you want to take a class in Spanish or German or French they have to have almost six semesters of language under their belt” (personal communication, March 19, 2018). This was perceived to be a barrier for many students that might not have met those expectations.

Lastly, Coordinator 1 discussed a few other barriers that she has seen deter students in her six years working with Marquette's FLS. Grades have also been a deterrent for many students. “They weren't willing to risk a GPA or risk failure to really learn the language”. Alongside Coordinator 2's point about the challenge for students to obtain a certain level of language proficiency, conduct their courses in a foreign language, and receive good grades as a result. This is a risk that many students are not willing to take if they want to earn good grades and earn all their credits. Coordinator 1 also mentioned housing issues as a growing barrier for Marquette students in particular, stating “I think the housing market has hampered the situation...and I think we've seen a shift to sophomore year because they can get out of their housing.” She provided an example of a student who withdrew her application to study abroad because he was

not able to get out of her apartment lease, and could not find a sublet. This has become a bigger issue on campus as housing demands increase, apartment waiting lists get longer, and students are finding it harder to acquire desired housing after they leave the dorms. She noted her frustration in hearing students give this explanation when deciding to withdraw from study abroad, “That one drives me crazy” (personal communication, March 19, 2018).

Along similar lines to housing issues on campus, Coordinator 3 discussed students’ hesitation for being away from campus for long periods of time. “I think there is a fear of missing out piece for a majority of students who want to do leadership or be in sororities” (personal communication, March 19, 2018). As seen in the survey data, a few students did indicate the challenge of leaving their campus activities, such as the basketball team or work, to study abroad. Coordinator 1, who also works with minority and first-generation students on campus, noted the additional barriers for this group, including possible lack of family support, and added financial stress. She stated, “I think for low income students and first-generation students in particular, families don’t always understand the value of it (study abroad), and students work, so there’s a double whammy.” She added, “That reality for first-generation students is very different.”

To close, Coordinator 1 added that Marquette’s FLS department is shrinking overall. Language programs have slowly decreased in size and student language requirements have gradually lessened over the past few years. Years ago, the MU foreign language department toyed with the idea of making study abroad mandatory for FLS, but this idea never came to fruition.

## **Analysis of Data**

### **Survey and Interview Results**

Several inferences can be made when considering the data collected using literature review, survey and interview methods. When looking at the literature that surrounds this topic of SLA in the study abroad context, it's clear that not all students who study a second language in higher education make the decision to study abroad to further their language acquisition and cultural understanding. As noted earlier, there has also been a slight decrease in the number of foreign language majors that study abroad when looking at study abroad percentages over time. Similar trends can be seen through this case study at MU. Of the number of FLS who participated in the survey, only 68% (n=77 students) reported that they have or will study abroad during their undergraduate years, meaning 32% (n=36 students) of FLS in this particular study will not choose to, or will be unable to study abroad during their undergraduate career. Furthermore, many FLS have had little to no contact with the Office of International Education at MU at all, and therefore have never had an opportunity to interact with the staff to address any concerns or examine their SA options.

With many FLS students and three Education Abroad Coordinators reporting courses, credits and graduation requirements as the largest barrier to study abroad, it can be inferred that some programs within the university lack the knowledge of, support for, and/or ability to facilitate seamless engagement with international education programming that will fit within students' required curriculum. The challenge brought to light by both the interviewees and FLS, is that coursework is difficult to find abroad and international foreign language courses that might be beneficial for SLA, are not being approved by Marquette university for equivalency or credit. Additionally, financial restraints are a salient issue for many FLS, meaning the additional

costs of a study abroad program, whether it be during a semester, break or summer, is inhibiting many of these students from participating. Other issues on campus, such as housing restraints, family support or overall student fear are also preventing students from taking the next step in the process, although they might have motivation to do so.

Another interesting result of the study is the choice FLS made to enroll in courses in their second language while abroad. Of the 46 FLS who have already studied abroad, seven of them did not take courses in a foreign language for various reasons. Additionally, of the 31 students who plan to study abroad, eight of these students indicated “maybe” or “no” they will not take courses in a foreign language. Additionally, six of the FLS who do not plan to study abroad indicated that they plan to use their second language in their career. For these six students this begs the question, then why not choose to study abroad? The SEM theoretical framework would suggest that a hesitant or negative attitude toward the target language or language learning in general may affect a student’s decision. Similarly, SDT would suggest that possible extrinsic or external factors may have influenced these decisions. For example, fear of a bad grade or lack of comprehension that would affect a student’s confidence might be a deterrent. The opportunity to travel to a desired location may also influence a student’s intrinsic motivation. In the case of FLS who did not plan to study abroad but would like to use their language in the future, extrinsic factors such as finances, course requirements or personal fears may be sufficient to override a student’s motivation.

As seen in the presentation of data, interview participants agreed on several points regarding both motivations and barriers that they see amongst FLS. Some direct correlations can be drawn between this data and data found in the literature review. Coordinators 1 and 2 referenced their experience working with students who were very motivated by language and

culture, and less focused on location preference or travel. This could have some connection to Anderson's (2015) findings that suggest students with higher motivation for world learning and personal growth were more likely to choose a challenging program and homestay. Additionally, Coordinator 1 made specific reference to minority and first-generation students at MU, and their struggle with financial limitations and support from family members who may not understand the value to study abroad or have experience in this area. This may directly relate to Mark Salisbury's (2008) work on how socio-economic factors influence a student's decision or motivation to study abroad, which may play a factor here. This is in contrast to students whose parents many also have studied abroad and support this opportunity for their own children. Coordinator 1 compared these two groups stating, "Many Marquette students are worried about med school, and the *EOP* (Equal Opportunity Program) student is worried about: I don't have family support, and how am I going to pay for it. I need to work. What's the value" (personal communication, March 19, 2018)? This same concept is echoed by Dessoff's (2006) research on minority students, as mentioned in the literature review.

Interview participants also discussed the challenge in finding course requirements abroad that will be approved by Marquette. Coordinator 2 specifically made reference to the struggle to find approved coursework at international institutions where students can experience full language immersion. When referring to FLS she stated:

It makes them want to go to an English-speaking institution more often over going to native institution, because they can just take classes in English, and they don't have to take anything in Spanish. At the foreign institution they are concerned that maybe they aren't going to get credit. (personal communication, March 19, 2018)

We can assume here that in order for students to participate in study abroad, it needs to have value for them, or provide a benefit that they believe is worth their time and effort. Additionally, they also must feel as though they can succeed, earn a high grade and receive the transfer credit, for example. This is a directly benefit to the student, and will not inhibit their chances to move onto medical school or graduate school, in the case of MU students, as mentioned by Coordinator 1. As Oxford (1994) suggested, motivation should be defined more broadly to include other factors such as the fear of failure or success, finding the value and worth in something, and seeing an equal amount outputs to inputs. This concept certainly holds up when looking at the data received from interview participants.

### **Socio-Educational Model and Motivations**

This data on motivation provides a glimpse into overall student drive for study abroad from the perspective of a FLS at a private institution. From here, it's possible to draw connections between certain widely accepted motivational frameworks and the data collected in this study. The SEM (Gardner, 1985), for example, suggests that SLA is related closely to student motivation and other factors including positive attitudes towards a learning environment, the target language community, and learning a second language in general. Generally speaking, a student's success in moving towards L2 proficiency will lie in their motivation, attitude and interest in foreign language and the target language culture, and their degree of integrative orientation. Based on the survey results from Group A, there may lie a correlation between the biggest reported motivator (language acquisition), and attitudes toward the target language and foreign language in general. It is possible, that students who were motivated to study abroad mostly to improve their SLA have a positive attitude toward that language, and therefore are likely to change their behaviors resulting in improved language proficiency. Additionally, Group

B's most reported motivator of cultural exploration may signify a higher degree of integrativeness, or openness, and a positive attitude toward the target language community as noted in Gardner's Model. These would be two areas of additional research.

An additional piece of Gardner's SEM is the proposal of two types of motivation; integrative and instrumental. This might mean the difference between learning a language for personal enrichment and to better oneself, in contrast to learning language to get a job, win a promotion, or satisfy a curriculum requirement. Both Group A and B reported personal growth as one of their motivators for studying abroad, which aligns with Gardner's definition of integrative motivation, in addition to cultural exploration. Therefore, at the time of the survey, students in both groups were perceived to be driven to study abroad by an integrative motivation or a one that satisfies personal growth and cultural enrichment. A small percentage (10%) of Group B reported professional reasons as their biggest motivator, which aligns with instrumental motivation. It's possible that many students in these groups were also motivated by instrumental motivations, however they were not reported as the most important in their choice to study abroad.

### **Connection to Self-Determination Theory**

In many ways, the SDT (Deci and Ryan, 2000) works as a natural framework for this small study by providing possible explanation of student motivation or lack-there-of. SDT looks at the way in which extrinsic motivations (the social environment) effect intrinsic motivations (a natural, internally-driven motivation). Within the group of FLS from this study, 77 students (Group A and B) had made the choice to study abroad and reported certain motivations to support their choice. According to SDT, to get to this point, this group of students would have experienced a certain number of extrinsic motivators that supported their sense of competence,



autonomy or relatedness, driving their intrinsic motivation to continue with SLA. Additionally, any extrinsic motivations would have had such a positive effect on their intrinsic motivation that it led to their choice to pursue study abroad while at Marquette. On the other hand, SDT would suggest that the 36 students who chose not to study abroad may have experienced extrinsic motivations or factors that thwarted their intrinsic motivation, causing them to forgo an international experience for SLA. In this case, extrinsic factors such as: finances, coursework, fear, inconvenience, campus obligations, and family, among others disillusioned their inherent intrinsic motivation.

### **Conclusions**

The purpose of this study was to answer the question; what are the motivations and barriers of foreign language students to studying their second language abroad during their time at Marquette University? Though this small study is limited by several factors as explained previously, several conclusions can be drawn from the data gathered that directly address the research question. After review of the data collected from the student survey and Coordinator interviews, it's understood that not all FLS at Marquette University choose to participate in study abroad. Additionally, not all students that chose to study abroad elected to enroll in classes in their second language, which demonstrates that while some students are motivated to go abroad, other external factors can influence the degree to which they engage with the L2.

The most significant motivator overall for FLS as reported by Groups A and B was second language acquisition, with cultural exploration as a close second. A student's motivation will depend on several factors including: their overall attitude toward the target language and culture, level of fluency in the language, opportunities to obtain needed course requirements, and external factors that support their intrinsic motivation (such as financial means, lack of issues

with housing, good grades, family support, etc.). On the other hand, the biggest barrier to study abroad perceived by Group C was courses, credits and graduate requirements, with financial concerns as a close second. A student's decision to forgo a study abroad experience will be influenced by: lack of Marquette approved coursework abroad, fear, prior engagements on campus, and external factors that thwart their intrinsic motivation (such as financial stress, lack of family support, issues with campus housing, etc.).

Interview participants agreed that language acquisition and obtaining a level of fluency that will help students reach their goals was a significant motivator. There was also a consensus that motivation can depend on the student's academic program. For example, students who are language majors seem to be more motivated by the language itself, fluency, and personal growth. Students who are language minors or use language as a supplement to their major of academic study seem to be more motivated by practical applications, such as using the language to obtain a job or interact with future clients or patients. It was also clear that many students are motivated by location, in some capacity, above all else. Two coordinators agreed that students who are truly motivated by language, and not location, tend to choose non-traditional locations where they can be fully engaged in the L2.

Coordinators, as well as FLS, agreed that the most significant perceived barriers are financial challenges and the difficulty in finding and obtaining MU approved coursework abroad, a challenge also referenced in the literature review. It is understood that these barriers affect the majority of FLS who have chosen not to pursue study abroad opportunities at MU. Other barriers mentioned included student housing issues, on-campus obligations, and challenges faced by minority students such as family support. A key takeaway is to acknowledge these barriers, so they can be proactively and/or reactively addressed. Increased collaboration between

departments on campus is essential and overall, there should be a university-wide mindset which supports language learning in a study abroad context. This starts with education and collaboration.

### **Practical Applicability**

Now that this data exists, the natural next step is understanding what to do with it. The results of this study can benefit a few different organizations and groups. First and foremost, the Education Abroad team at MU could potentially gain the most from these findings. First, a better understanding of what drives FLS to participate in international programs can inform more intentional and effective advising practices that draw on such motivations and engage students in stimulating conversation. Similarly, in recognizing perceived student barriers, such issues can be addressed during student and family interactions and can drive the team's interactions with other departments moving forward. For example, the team might benefit from more attempts to connect with Financial Aid to find ways in which they can make programming more cost-effective, or the Academic Advising department to create more efficient advising processes. Additionally, communication and collaboration needs to occur between the education abroad team and various curricular departments and faculty that are charged with reviewing and approving international courses for credit in order to address this significant barrier. The result could be the ability for students to find more course abroad that will count toward their MU curriculum requirements. Lastly, a better understanding of motivations and deterrents for FLS can lead to better marketing strategies and inform better presentations for student groups, which address these factors.

This FLS feedback can also help to drive new potential partnerships for the Education Abroad team with international organizations and universities. For example, since finances are a

barrier for many FLS students, it would be beneficial to look into cost-efficient programs that offer quality coursework for a minimal price or short duration, and explore additional scholarship opportunities. Similarly, if students are looking for coursework that fits into their required MU curriculum, the team should work to secure partnerships with universities who can guarantee curriculum specific coursework. For example, many nursing students have reported frustration the lack of nursing options abroad, therefore the Education Abroad team has already begun the process of creating agreements with two nursing-specific programs in two different countries.

Students and families would be a natural secondary beneficiary of this study, as the team adjusts advising practices, marketing strategies, and the explores the idea of securing potential new partnerships. This means that more students and their families will receive the information needed about study abroad programming to make an informed decision, and students may ultimately have access to more program options. Because addressing student and families' concerns is such a crucial part of the study abroad process, this could be a very significant secondary benefit to this small study.

Similarly, international partners and other MU professionals could ultimately benefit from this data in a similar way that students and families might. As this data helps to inform decisions about advising and marketing for the study abroad team, other MU professionals stand to gain valuable information about study abroad as they work with the MU team to improve curriculum integration. In addition, working on curriculum integration means having the ability to better advise students academically, assisting them with a four-year plan that includes study abroad. International partners could also see the secondary benefit of more incoming students if the population of FLS at MU who choose to study abroad increases. Additionally, new exchange

agreements with international partners that meet FLS needs is mutually beneficial for both partners involved.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

Though this small case study did manage to shed some light on what motivates and deters FLS from choosing to participate in study abroad at Marquette University, there is much room for further research, and this study simply opens the doors to many more important questions that merit inquiry. Four such areas of additional research are noted here, although there are certainly others that could be explored.

As seen in the results of this study, many students who did not plan to study abroad still indicated that they intended to use their second language in their future professional career. That being said, professionals and students in this field would benefit from knowing what employers are saying about this topic. Are they more likely to hire a student who has more advanced language acquisition, and has used their language in a real-life context? Would they prefer a candidate who has interacted directly with native speakers and experienced the language within the full cultural context? One area of further research might be to examine which students are finding jobs using their second language, and if students who studied their second language abroad have an advantage or a higher likelihood of securing those jobs. Additionally, it would be helpful to know if employers prefer certain languages over others, and which languages or combinations of study are desirable.

Because the majority of FLS participants report that they are deterred by coursework and graduation requirements, this is could be an important source for further research. There must be effective ways in which higher education institutions can make study abroad more accessible and seamless for students, regardless of their program of study. Though not a liberal arts college,

which can sometimes be an environment more conducive to international programming, MU can still be a supportive environment that makes study abroad a real and viable option for all students who have the willingness and drive to participate. It begs the question, what can schools such as MU do to better facilitate and support study abroad programming across curriculums? What specific steps can be taken? Is curriculum integration the key for all students, or does it start with supportive and knowledgeable faculty and academic advisors? Perhaps there is a need for more consistent and frequent communication with international partners about student needs.

Additionally, it would be beneficial to see what other schools are doing and create an environment of shared ideas and collaboration among institutions. If more information could be gathered about how to better and more effectively integrate study abroad into a student's four years, it would mean higher study abroad participation rates across the board.

An additional area of further research stems from a comment made from one of the Education Abroad Coordinators interviewed in this study. She discussed her experience in working with FLS and their motivations behind their choices of program and location, and noticed a possible correlation between motivation for language, or type of motivation, and location choice. She noted that location can be a key deciding factor for students in study abroad. Most students from MU choose to study abroad in Europe, and few students choose non-traditional locations where there might be a stronger language component, or more opportunity to speak a second language. She noticed that students who choose non-traditional locations where they will utilize their second language more frequently, are driven by factors other than location. Therefore, it would be interesting to discover if the motivations of those students who chose non-traditional locations were different from those who chose Western Europe, and how

they differ. Much of the data gathered in this study could be used to inform this question, in part, however interviews with students would provide more detailed information for this question.

Lastly, it would be interesting to explore a possible connection between student attitudes and achievement in this context. In Gardner's SEM, "...it was proposed that attitudes influence motivation, which in turn influences achievement" (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 4). However, from this study there is no way to know if students prior experience or attitude toward their language learning environment influenced their decision to study abroad, or their subsequent achievement in SLA. Is there a correlation between a negative experience and the decision to forgo study abroad, or a positive experience and decision to pursue it? Additionally, did a positive attitude or experience lead to higher achievement in SLA, as Gardner's model suggests?

Though there are many areas for further research to develop a better understanding of FLS in the study abroad context nationally, this study is a start to acknowledging student perceptions at a small private university. With the hope that language programs at higher education institutions will remain and continue to thrive, it's imperative that schools do what they can to promote opportunities for second language immersion abroad. Equally important is finding ways to recognize and use student motivations as a tool to enhance programming, address barriers, and ultimately support study abroad experiences for all students who study a second language.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A

#### Survey Informed Consent and Survey Instrument

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##### Start of Block: Informed consent

Q16 You are invited to take part in a survey! This survey will inform and support the understanding of the motivations and barriers of Marquette students enrolled in a foreign language program to study abroad. This is a final capstone project for my Master's program. The decision to participate is completely voluntary. In this survey, I will be asking you to report your personal motivations or barriers to studying abroad. The risks associated with this project are minimal and there are no direct benefits to you. Collection of data and survey responses using the internet involves the same risks that a person would encounter in everyday use of the internet, such as hacking or information unintentionally being seen by others. This survey will take less than 5 minutes. You can decide to not answer any questions or to stop participating at any time. The results of this survey will be included in my final capstone paper and presentation for my Master's program. Your identity will remain anonymous throughout the final publication. Your participation in the survey will be key in informing this study, and your participation is greatly appreciated! Do you agree to complete the survey?

Yes (1)

No (2)

##### End of Block: Informed consent

---

##### Start of Block: Initial Questions

Q1 What is your year in school?

- Freshman (1)
  - Sophomore (2)
  - Junior (3)
  - Senior (4)
  - Second year senior (5)
- 

Q2 What academic program(s) are you enrolled in at Marquette (majors and minors)?

\_\_\_\_\_

---

Q4 Have you studied abroad while at Marquette?

- Yes (1)
- No, and I don't plan to (2)
- No, but I plan to (3)

**End of Block: Initial Questions**

---

**Start of Block: Have studied abroad**

Q4 Which study abroad program did you participate in (name of the program or host university)?

\_\_\_\_\_

---

Q5 Did you study foreign language, or take class taught in a foreign language while abroad?

Yes (feel free to explain) (1) \_\_\_\_\_

No (please explain why you did not) (2)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Q6 What were your **3** main motivations for choosing to study abroad?

Second language acquisition (1)

New cultural experience/ knowledge of new culture (2)

Increased independence (3)

Career/professional benefits (4)

Exploration of one's own self/ personal growth (5)

Acquire international friends (6)

Influence or encouragement of your friends (7)

Opportunity to travel to other countries (8)

Other (please state here): (9) \_\_\_\_\_

Other (please state here): (10)  
\_\_\_\_\_

Q7 Which of these was the *biggest* motivator for you to go abroad?

---

**End of Block: Have studied abroad**

---

**Start of Block: Do not plan to**

Q8 Why did you choose not to participate in study abroad? In other words, what are your biggest barriers? (please indicate **3** barriers)

Financial reasons (1)

Lack of approval or encouragement from parents/guardian/family (2)

Fear (please explain your fear: travel, unknown, etc.) (3)

---

No interest in going abroad (4)

Courses, credits or graduation requirements (please explain) (5)

---

Unaware of study abroad opportunities (6)

Leaving your comfort zone/ convenience of home (7)

Other (please state here): (8) \_\_\_\_\_

Other (please state here): (9) \_\_\_\_\_

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Q9 Which of these was the *biggest* barrier for you?

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Q15 Do you plan to use your second language in your professional career?

- Yes (1)
- No (2)

---

Q17 Would you consider going abroad after you graduate to use your second language? If so, in what capacity?

- Yes (please explain) (1) \_\_\_\_\_
- No (2)

**End of Block: Do not plan to**

---

**Start of Block: Plan to**

Q10 Which program do you plan to apply for? (you can say "not sure")

\_\_\_\_\_

---

Q11 Do you plan to study foreign language, or take classes taught in a foreign language while abroad?

- Yes (1)
- Maybe (2)
- No (please explain why not) (3)

\_\_\_\_\_

Q14 What are your **3** main motivations for choosing to study abroad?

- Second language acquisition (1)
- New cultural experience/ knowledge of new culture (2)
- Increased independence (3)
- Career/ professional benefits (4)
- Exploration of one's own self/ personal growth (5)
- Acquire international friends (6)
- Influence or encouragement of your friends (7)
- Opportunity to travel to other countries (8)
- Other (please state here): (9) \_\_\_\_\_
- Other (please state here): (10) \_\_\_\_\_

Q15 Which of these is the *biggest* motivator for you to go abroad?

\_\_\_\_\_

**End of Block: Plan to**



## Appendix B

### Interview Informed Consent

#### INFORMED CONSENT

Interviewer/Researcher: Rebecca Schano

Email: [rebecca.anderson@mail.sit.edu](mailto:rebecca.anderson@mail.sit.edu) Phone: 414-288-3753

Project Title: Motivations and Barriers to Studying Foreign Language Abroad; A Marquette University Case Study.

You are invited to take part in an interview that will inform, supplement, and support the understanding of the motivations and deterrents of Marquette students enrolled in a foreign language program to study abroad. This study is a capstone project for my Master's program through SIT Graduate Institute. The decision to participate is completely voluntary. In this interview, I will be asking you to talk about your understanding of student motivations and barriers to study abroad. Specifically, I will ask about: discussions you have had with foreign language students regarding their motivation or perceived barriers to participating in education abroad, discussions you have had with other faculty and staff, and what differences you might see in the motivations and barriers of foreign language students in comparison to those of students enrolled in other programs of study.

If you decide to participate in this interview, I will ask your permission to make a voice recording - no video will be taken. The interview may take up to 30 minutes. You can decide to not answer any questions or to stop participating at any time during the process. You can also decide to retract your interview from being used for the final publication at any point after it is completed. Data and direct quotes may be used in the final publication of this capstone, and the results will be shared with Marquette's Office of International Education for their knowledge, and to help inform advising practices. Your job title will be included in the final publication of this capstone. Even though I will not be reporting your name, due to the small number of people interviewed, it may be possible to identify you.

I will be the only person with access to the interview recordings or written answers. Any direct quotes or information from the interview published will be done without using real names.

Your participation in the interview will be key in informing this study. If you would like to receive the recording of your interview or the final proposal, please let me know at [rebecca.anderson@mail.sit.edu](mailto:rebecca.anderson@mail.sit.edu).

**Please sign below and return this form to Rebecca Schano if you are willing to participate.**

X \_\_\_\_\_

Questions or concerns above and beyond what are addressed by the researcher can be directed to:

Advisor: Linda Gobbo

Email: [linda.gobbo@sit.edu](mailto:linda.gobbo@sit.edu)

Phone: 802-258-3260

OR

SIT Institutional Review Board:

Email: [irb@sit.edu](mailto:irb@sit.edu)

Phone: 802-258-3132

## Appendix C

### Interview Questions

- a) How long have you been working within Education Abroad at Marquette?
- b) In what capacity have you worked with students studying foreign language specifically, who would like to continue their second language study abroad?
- c) In your experience working with students studying foreign language, what have you found to be the most significant motivations for students to study abroad? How do you know this?
- d) Please expand upon your response by describing situations in which you've learned about these motivations or discussed these motivations with students.
- e) What do you believe to be the most significant barriers to study abroad for students who are studying foreign language?
- f) Please expand upon your response by describing the situations in which you've learned about or discovered these barriers or discussed these barriers with students.
- g) Have you ever received insight from faculty or staff from the College of Arts & Sciences or the Foreign Language Department about student motivations or barriers of study abroad? Please describe any situations in which you've discussed student motivations with these faculty or staff.
- h) Do you think the motivations for foreign language students to study abroad differs from those of students in other areas of study? In what way? Please explain why you think this way.