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Title of Thesis:

**The Impact of the Study Abroad Experience on Second Language Acquisition among UWI
Students in the Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics at the St Augustine
Campus**

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Abstract

Study Abroad (SA) programmes have provided significant benefits to language learners by placing them in the natural L2 environment with significant access to native speakers and diverse contexts, however, attention must be placed on the individual's Study Abroad experience which presents various factors that intervene and impact the overall benefits gained from these programmes. This study aims to discuss and analyze the impact of intervening factors, within the SA experience of UWI language students, on their overall participation in activities geared towards active L2 practice. A Mixed Methods Research design aided in the gathering of information which later reflected that factors such as accommodations, non-outgoing personalities, and racial prejudice limited active participation in SA activities whereas difficult class structures and long and difficult adjustment periods strengthen interactions with non-natives. In the long run, the combination of inhibiting factors deters the benefits to SLA whereas the combination of promoting factors benefit participants' academic performance and linguistic skill development.

Keywords: Study Abroad Programmes, Second Language Acquisition, Foreign Languages, Investment activities, Motivation profiles.

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Introduction

In the global context, attaining a second language is a beneficial venture for anyone in the corporate and educational world. This notion is recognized and supported in the local context with the provision of language degrees by the University of The West Indies (UWI) and additional opportunities for Study Abroad (SA) programmes, offered through the Department of Modern Languages and Linguistics (DMLL) and through the International Office. These SA programmes contribute as a complementary aspect to the average language student's Second Language Acquisition (SLA) by providing them with an "optimal language learning experience" ("Study and Work Abroad") among other personal benefits such as "self-sufficiency, confidence and independence in thinking" ("Applications Open for 2020/2021"). However, there exists a tendency of students (Language Majors and Minors) returning from these SA programmes with varying language learning experiences and varying levels of linguistic improvements coinciding with differing levels of active participation whilst on the programme. Observations of this nature incite further investigation into the factors of the SA experience that probe this active participation and the corresponding impact on the language learner's SLA.

Therefore, it is proposed that the benefits to SLA, gained through the UWI student's active participation using the Target Language (TL) in SA Programmes, is contingent on the various personal, social/environmental and programme-oriented factors which arise in the student's SA experience. Hence, this study invites academic probes on the many factors within the SA programmes offered by the DMLL and International Office that may inhibit or promote student engagement in the TL and their SLA.

This research focuses on the linguistic milestones and social, personal and programme-oriented influences in the SA experiences of students compiled from the French and Spanish SA programmes, being the few programmes that provide a formal academic setting and a natural and linguistically rich environment. Furthermore, by assessing the relationship between these contingent factors and the student's resulting SLA, it seeks to provide a deeper analysis on factors experienced specifically by language students of the UWI whilst on these programmes and in turn contribute to the literature pertaining to the effectiveness and value of SA programmes to the Language degrees of the UWI.

Methodology

This study employed a Mixed Methods Research Design, incorporating both Quantitative and Qualitative Data Analysis to provide a statistical and thematic breakdown of the components of the SA experience and the corresponding influence on student's participation levels and SLA enhancement. This study collected data from students who participated in an SA programme between a ten-year time frame (2010-2020). Participation during or after the second year of study at the UWI was a requirement to analyse the perceived changes in their language performance upon return. The participants for the study consisted of language students from the St Augustine Campus of the University of the West Indies (UWI) who majored or minored in French and/or Spanish and had also participated in an SA programme to French or Spanish-speaking countries. Initially, a list of eleven (11) students was gathered, all were contacted via Facebook or email to seek their permission for participation. Nine (9) students responded and were incorporated into the research's data collection. The composition of these students to their

corresponding programme types, programme length and period of study along with some labelling references are provided below (see table 1).

Table 1

The Composition of SA Participants and Their Respective Labelling Terms

Programme	No. of Students	Period of study	Length of Stay	Label for Study
La Universidad de Valladolid, Spain	2	2018	6 Months	Valladolid A, B
	2	2019	6 Months	Valladolid C, D
L'Université Michel de Montaigne	1	2019	9 Months	Bordeaux A
(Bordeaux III), France	1	2011	9 Months	Bordeaux B
L'Université des Antilles, Schoelcher, Martinique	1	2011	3 Months	Martinique A
L'Université des Antilles et de la Guyane, Martinique	1	2017	6 Months	Martinique B
La Universidad Nacional, Bogotá, Colombia	1	2010	6 Weeks	Colombia A

The study followed the Mixed Methods Research Design by employing the use of questionnaires through an online platform, Google Forms, and interviews done using video calls through the platform Zoom. The questionnaire consisted of 28 open and closed-ended questions that investigated the general demographic information related to the SA programme along with the Quantitative examination of their engagement in activities, interaction in the programme among native and international students, and their linguistic and academic improvements. The questionnaires were followed by a retrospective interview to access more in-depth responses of their experiences, interactions, participation, the factors that persuaded or dissuaded said

interactions and participation, and their perception of improvements with reference to their SLA and learning strategies.

This study consists of six main chapters. The first chapter compiles various scholarly articles and research to provide a description into the usefulness of SA programmes to SLA and a review of the noted factors presented in these programmes that promote or inhibit successful SLA. The second chapter, entitled *Study Abroad Programme Activities*, begins the presentation of results and findings from the research as it provides an outline of the various types of in and out-of-school activities that the students engaged in while on the SA programme while also highlighting the frequency of this participation. The third chapter, entitled *Programme, Personal and Social factors*, gives a breakdown of the influential external and internal factors experienced by the students which may have impacted the rate of their participation in activities and interactions in the TL.

The fourth chapter, entitled *Motivation and Investment*, looks at the implications of student motivation profiles, that is their language learning goals and desired outcomes, on the rate of their investment in language learning activities, that is their level of participation in the TL or use of the TL in and out of the classroom. It also describes the relationship between the student's motivation and investment input and their attempt at overcoming inhibiting personal, social and programme-oriented factors. The fifth chapter, entitled *Linguistic Benefits*, gives an overview of the perceived linguistic benefits and improvements gained from the students' SA experience with a comparison of their perceived skills in the language and their academic performance along the pre and post study abroad timeline. The final chapter provides an

analytical discussion of the findings by relating trends, as mentioned in the literature compiled, whilst presenting new trends discovered in this study.

Chapter One: Literature Review

SLA has been defined through various lenses which tend to place importance on practice and varied contextual situations. The Skills Acquisition Theory by Lyster and Sato, which defines SLA as “a gradual transition from effortful use to more automatic use of the target language” (71), also favours active contextual practice in the L2 to achieve effortless and native-like L2 performance. This is based on the notion that after puberty, language acquisition capabilities decrease, relying more on declarative knowledge such as grammar rules, than on procedural knowledge such as effortless word retrieval from memory (Lyster and Sato 73). Despite its focus on mainly classroom immersion approaches, the study highlighted approaches towards contextualized practice in the TL. In addition, Hammerly’s study, which highlights the weakness of classroom setting in achieving successful immersion, emphasises approaches within the natural sociolinguistic setting, which involves being surrounded by a diverse body of native speakers (398). These requirements are a communicative context generally found in SA programmes which “provide language learners with greater access to authentic input together with sustained and varied opportunities to use the target language with native speakers” (Hernández 650). SA programmes also supply a learning context which, as noted by Ndhlovu in his assessment of a blended approach of class experience and communicative fieldwork, are a useful training ground for students to examine and practice the structures of the language (150).

Therefore, SA programmes, by fulfilling these core contexts, can lead to successful SLA. This is recognized within comparative studies of at-home students and SA students, where SA learners tend to relay higher proficiency in speaking, pronunciation, narrative and discursive abilities, discourse management strategies, and a reduced use of communication strategies to

bridge gaps in their linguistic performance (Segalowitz et al 13). This observation was linked to the wider access to native speakers leading to the superior speaking and communication skills of the SA group. In a local study carried out on UWI students who participated on SA and Exchange programmes, Roberts clearly identifies improvements of listening and speaking skills where students related higher levels of confidence and fluency in speaking and had more success in the listening exams in their language degrees (23, 24). Despite the optimal conditions of SA programmes towards SLA, the learners' immersion and their interactions with natives may not go as initially expected (Freed 51), which leads to the possible intervening factors that may promote or hinder such interaction and overall practice of the TL.

Firstly, the integration/acclturation is a prime factor and, according to Barjesteh and Vaseghi in their interpretation of Schumann's Acculturation Model, deals with "the social and psychological taxonomy of factors which are believed to be important in the process of SLA in natural contexts" (580). This incorporates the development of a new identity to cope with the acquisition of a new language whilst being immersed in its culture, hence, highlighting a critical experience of any L2 learner upon arrival in a new setting. Likewise, the claim of acculturation being the initial factor amongst others resulting in natural SLA (Schumann 385) explains how one's adjustment to the culture and development of their identity as part of the new culture must be completed before their productive participation can commence and only then can they reap benefits to their proficiency and SLA. In addition, Churchill and DuFon, in their review of elements involved in an SA experience, highlight the potential risk of anxiety (16) and elements of cultural differences in the adjustment period that can impact overall adjustment and may retard the participation and engagement in the TL community (20). Roberts also highlights

experiences of racial prejudice which may impact the student's interactions and cultural integration (24). Despite these many issues, various other studies emphasized friendships as a beneficial aid to adjustment/acclimation which may lead to skills such as adaptation, effective intercultural communication and successful SLA. (Lybeck 180; Campbell 742, 743)

Secondly, programme variables, which are vital to guide the L2 learner who may require assistance to connect and engage with the host culture (Ingram 216), may either promote the student's interaction and potential native friendship development or inhibit the necessary grouping of individuals that aids SLA (Churchill and DuFon 23). In this light, accommodation may play a role in student's interaction and their active participation in the TL where the integrated nature of dorms for both local and international students in place of exclusive international student dorms or the residency in student dormitories in place of off-campus accommodations present favourable results to the relationship development with local students and intercultural contact (Campbell 733, 734). Likewise, class types showed potential impact on social interaction, where regular classes allow for interaction with more local students, whilst the classes exclusively for SA/International students may discourage or reduce efforts towards interactions with local students (Campbell 735). Campbell's analysis also showed that peer programmes, clubs and extracurricular activities helped facilitate and promote friendships and interactions with natives (736). However, she highlighted the importance of mutual interest between L2 learners and natives to form connections and interact amongst each other (737, 740) as it helps create situational factors to extend friendship circles and avoid tendencies of remaining among one's preconstructed friend groups (736, 739).

Thirdly, personal factors, which may perform a significant role in the student's interaction, are varied and individual based. These include the L2 learners' competence, whereby the perception or real lack of language proficiency alongside a fear of making mistakes reduces their attempts or desire to seek out, initiate or extend interactions with local hosts (Campbell 740). Isabelli-Garcia's study highlights attitudes as influential factors to connections with host nationals, where open minded and positive attitudes to the TL culture are positively correlated to friendship development (254-256). However, the preference for familiarity may inhibit the students' search for native friendships and, hence, lead to the issue of friendships with only foreigners/international students (Cheng 180) which although may help alleviate the anxiety of being immersed in a different environment, may negatively affect their sociocultural adjustment and possibly inhibit or retard the active search for native peers (Pearson-Evans 43, 45).

A broader category of these influential personal factors includes student's motivation and investment. Hernández expands on Gardner's and Lambert's definition of motivation regarding language learning which divides into Integrative Motivation, the interest in language learning to interact in the TL culture and with native speakers of the TL, and Instrumental Motivation, the interest in language learning to benefit practically, academically or career wise (Hernández 652; Gardner and Lambert 267). These forms of motivation, especially Integrative Motivation, provide a driving force to push students out of their comfort zone and invest more time and effort in developing the L2 proficiency (Hernández 652). In addition, Hernández highlights the positive relationship between motivation and interactional/investment opportunities where he found that, due to the vast interaction opportunities presented to the SA students, they were more able than at-home students to invest in the activities that they were motivated towards (659). Regarding

investment, Kong, in her analysis of the impact of identity, motivation and learning strategies on the individual's perceptions of the SA learning experience, presents Norton's concept of investment as the active engagement in determined investment activities and TL practice based on multiple identities, goals and the understanding of potential benefits of these actions towards these goals and multiple identities (698). Kong also explains the heavy investment of L2 learners being linked to their desire to accomplish their goals and responsibilities projected in their identities with the TL community whereas the resistance to learning is due to the conflict between the learner's desires and the real learning community (699). Hence, one's identity and future goals may play a part in the selection and realization of investment activities and the extent of this investment. Despite the many potential inhibiting factors, studies such as Jones and Bond's showed that many SA students do overcome these factors and have significant gains in terms of "personal adjustment, language acquisition and culture learning regardless of length" of the SA programme (27).

To conclude, although the literature did not mainly focus on the local situation of SA students' experiences, the benefits obtained from programmes offered by the UWI and the influential factors experienced in the specific programmes of this study, it does act as a building block for relevant research on this field to be realized within the local context. The following chapter touches on findings related to the types of SA programme/investment activities in which SA participants engaged alongside the frequency of participation in these activities.

Chapter Two: Study Abroad Programme Activities

The data reflected four core investment activities in which students engaged: classroom activity (courses), extracurricular activities, out-of-school activities, and general interactions with natives and non-natives. Courses were a mandatory activity for the SA participants, however, there was variation to the types of courses taken. Eight (8) of the nine (9) SA participants selected equivalent courses to the home university course requirements. Only Colombia A was limited to only two course equivalents (Literature and Language).

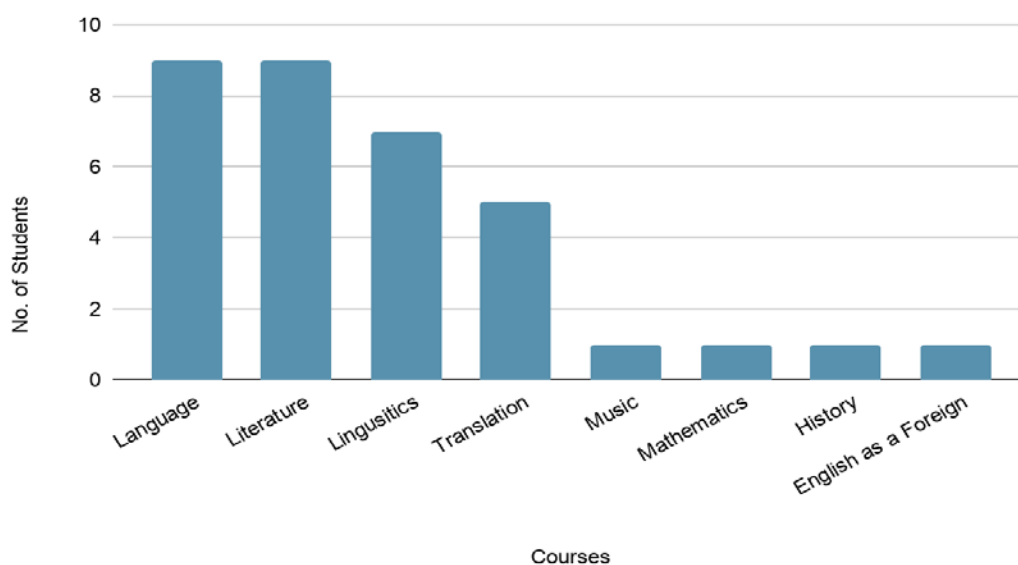


Fig. 1. The types of courses taken by SA participants

All nine (9) SA participants enrolled in a Language and Literature course (see fig. 1), whereas Linguistics and Translation were taken by the Bordeaux, Valladolid participants and, in the case of Linguistics, an additional Martinique participant (A). Only Bordeaux participants

enrolled in the general courses such as Music and EFL. Furthermore, Valladolid C and D and Bordeaux A and B stated that the universities did not offer the L2 language as a language equivalent course, instead replacing it with a Linguistics course. However, they were provided certificate language courses in private institutions which they stated helped them immensely during the programme. Interestingly, Valladolid participants (A and B) were initially enrolled in Language courses in the university but were forced to switch to Linguistics courses after experiencing conflicts with the language professor.

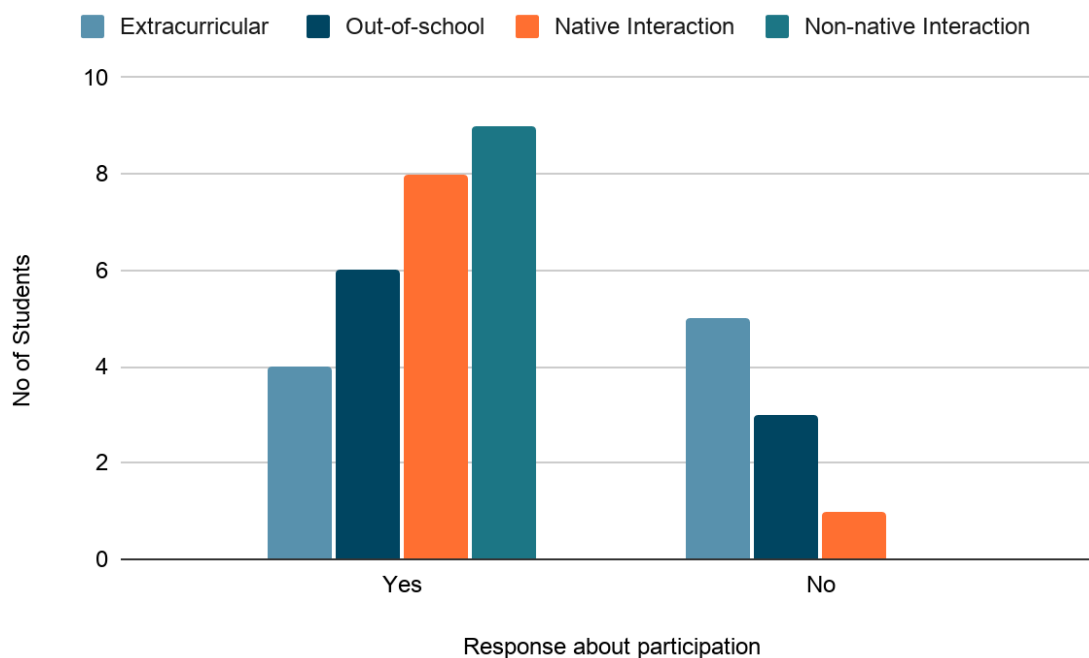


Fig. 2. The SA participants' involvement in investment activities

The majority participated in out-of-school activities (6), interactions with natives (8) and non-natives (9), whereas only a minority participated in extracurricular activities (4) (see fig. 2).

The extracurricular activities were acknowledged for providing regular access to native speakers and aiding the development in vocabulary and communication skills. Out-of-school activities, as highlighted by 5 of the 6 participants, were introduced or promoted by friends (native and non-native) or international student communities. Those who did not participate in out-of-school activities stated it was due to their non-outgoing personality (Valladolid A, Martinique A) or not having been offered/introduced to such activities (Valladolid B). In addition, it was also noted that there was significant variety in out-of-school activities compared to the extracurricular activities. Popular out-of-school activities among SA participants were city tours/sightseeing, nightlife activities, traveling and going to the movies while other less popular activities included karaoke, cultural shows, beach visits and attending sporting events. On the other hand, the few extracurricular activities were mostly specific to sports and/or exercise. With reference to interactions, only Valladolid A interacted with non-natives only while the rest (8) interacted with both groups (see table 2).

Table 2

The Composition of SA Students' Responses of Participation in Investment Activities

Activities	Participants
Extracurricular Activities	Bordeaux (A,B), Martinique (A,B),
Out-of-School Activities	Bordeaux (A,B), Martinique (B), Valladolid (C,D), Colombia (A)
Native Interaction	Bordeaux (A,B), Martinique (A,B), Valladolid (B,C,D), Colombia (A)
Non-Native Interaction	All SA participants
Activities	Non-Participants
Extracurricular Activities	Valladolid (A,B,C,D), Colombia (A)
Out-of-school Activities	Martinique (A), Valladolid (A, B)
Native Interaction	Valladolid (A)

Frequency of Participation in Investment Activities

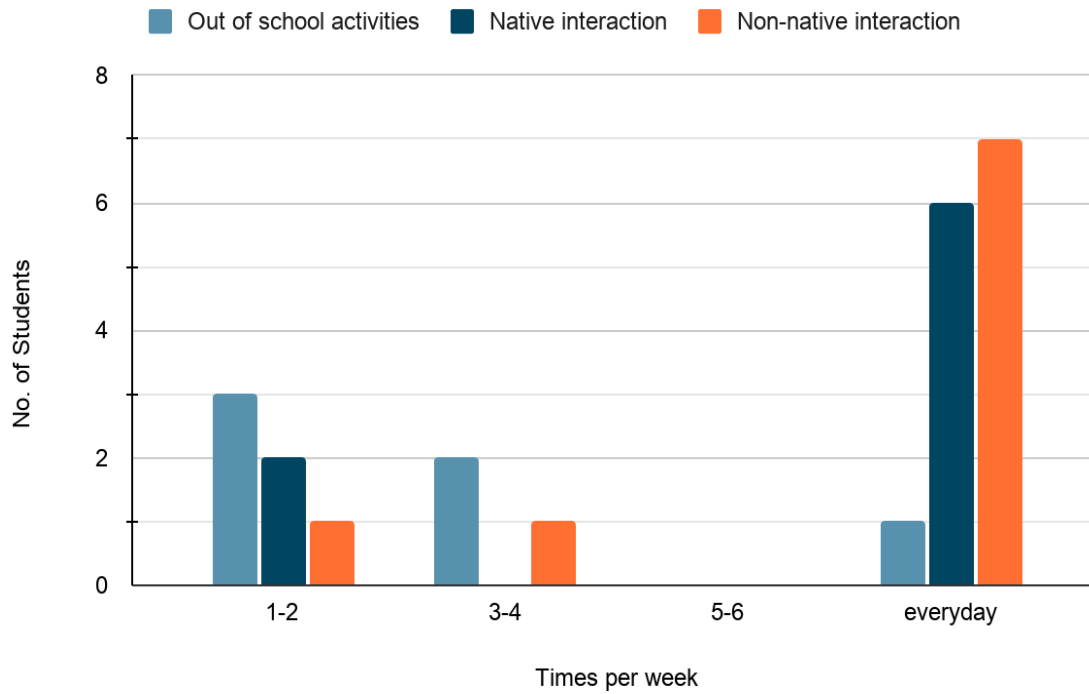


Fig. 3. The frequency of participation in investment activities

Table 3

The Composition of SA Participants in the Different Frequencies of Participation

Composition of High Frequency participation (5-7 times per week)	
Out-of-school Activities	Bordeaux (A)
Native Interaction	Bordeaux (A), Valladolid (B, D), Martinique (A,B), Colombia (A)
Non-Native Interaction	Bordeaux (A), 4 Valladolid (A,B,C,D), Martinique (A), Colombia (A)
Composition of Low Frequency participation (1-4 times per week)	
Out-of-school Activities	Bordeaux (B), Martinique (B), Colombia (A), Valladolid (C, D)
Native Interaction	Bordeaux (B), Valladolid (C)
Non-Native Interaction	Bordeaux (B), Martinique (B)

The majority of participants (5) engaged less frequently in out-of-school activities, i.e., 1-4 times per week, and only Bordeaux A participated every day (see table 3). However, many had very frequent interactions with natives (6) and with non-natives (7) where the majority (5) also frequently interacted with both groups (see fig. 3). Two participants (Valladolid B and D) even stated that they spoke with their non-native associates in the L2 because it was the only common language among them. Those who had less frequent interactions with natives were; Valladolid C and Bordeaux B, and with non-natives were; Bordeaux B and Martinique B (see table 3).

Comparative Frequency of Interaction with natives vs non-natives

Five (5) SA participants stated that they formed friendships with both natives and non-natives alike and interacted with both groups every day. On the other hand, the remaining four (4) participants had varying interaction profiles between natives and non-natives. Half of them, who formed friends with only non-natives (international students), interacted everyday with non-natives, yet only one interacted 1-2 times per week with natives (Valladolid C) while the other did not interact with natives at all (Valladolid A). The other half, who formed friends with both groups, either interacted everyday with natives and 3-4 times a week with non-natives (Martinique B) or 1-2 times per week with both groups (Bordeaux B). Interestingly two of these four participants (Bordeaux B, Martinique B) stated that their native associates would at times speak to them in English to practice. The following chapter enumerates the different programme, social and personal factors experienced by SA participants of the study whilst relating these factors to the respective participation ratio in investment activities along with the varying frequencies of participation.

Chapter Three: Programme, Personal and Social Factors

Programme Factors

Ratio of International Students to Native Students

Students that enrolled in Translation (7), Linguistics (6), Music (1), History (1), EFL (1), Mathematics (1) and finally Literature (8), with the exception of Colombia A, stated that those courses had a high native student population. Only their L2 language courses had a high international/non-native population. Interestingly, the Bordeaux SA programme, as highlighted by Bordeaux B, promoted a mixture of language oriented and general courses, thus, only Bordeaux A and B enrolled in courses such as Music and EFL etc.

Class Experience

The majority identified insignificant to no difference between their home and host institution regarding their class experience. However, three participants (Valladolid A, B, C) stated a lack of visual aid and technology in their classes which proved burdensome in keeping up with the content conveyed mainly through oral instruction in the L2. They also mentioned that their classes were more fast paced and less interactive, as they catered to native students, which reduced their opportunities to speak and participate. Valladolid A and B also stated that presumed racial prejudice from their professor affected their academic experience when they had to replace a Language course with a more difficult Linguistics alternative. In addition, Valladolid A also mentioned a perceived trend of natives avoiding interactions with non-natives in class and at school. Interestingly, in both Valladolid and Bordeaux programmes, participants stated that some of their courses, although having a minority of international students, did accommodate

international students where the teachers employed the TL for instruction at a slower rate and the content was easier to follow and, as a result, those courses were easier to do.

Accommodation

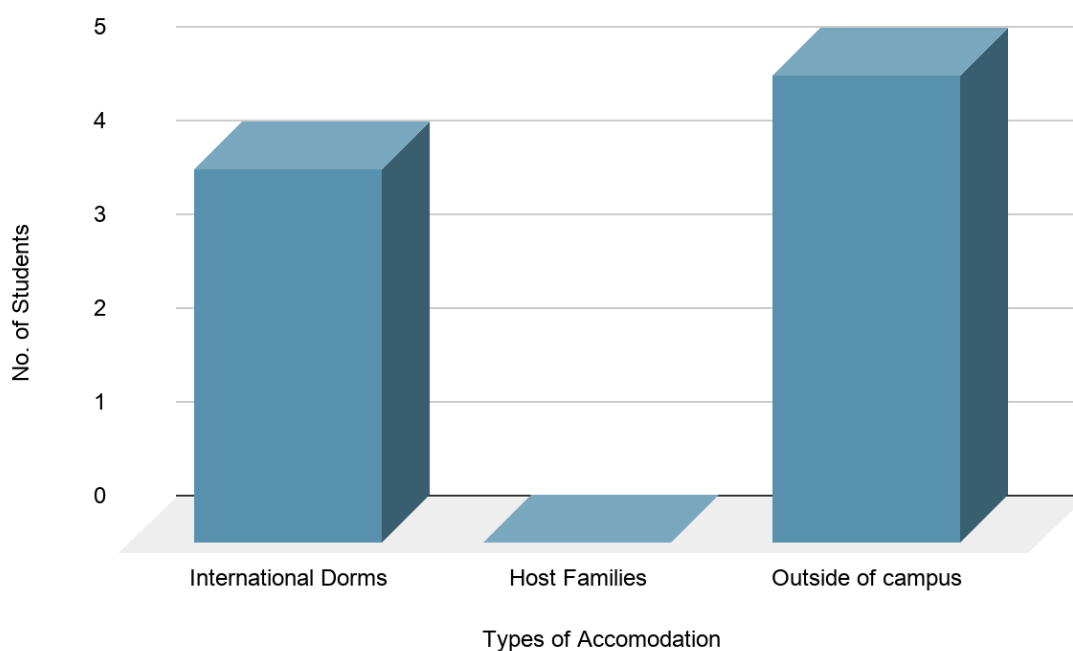


Fig. 4. The accommodations of SA participants

Five (5) of the SA participants resided an average 5–15-minute walk outside of the campus whereas four (4) stated that they stayed in international dorms (see fig. 4). Nonetheless, all participants mentioned that they lived mostly amongst non-natives/international students and formed friendships/connections with whomever they lodged, either with international students or with fellow companions from their home institution.

Length of Programme

Five (5) SA participants' (Valladolid A, B, C, D and Martinique B) programmes lasted 6 months, two (2) SA participants' (Bordeaux A and B), programmes lasted 9 months, Martinique A's programme lasted 3 months while Colombia A's lasted 6 weeks (see table 1). It was also noted that the shortest 6-week programme had a packed class schedule and consequently Colombia A stated that she spent more time in classes and in the university. Conversely, one student in the 6-month programme (Valladolid C) felt that their schedule was freer than at their home institution, so they had more time to themselves.

Personal Factors

Expectations

It was observed that five (5) SA students (Valladolid B, C, D, Martinique B, Bordeaux B) had open expectations and were aiming to "go with the flow". Out of those, 3 (Valladolid C, D, Martinique B) along with Valladolid A stated that they had expectations of a good experience. Bordeaux A stated that they also expected to only need to rely on interactions in the SA programme to improve their proficiency, which they later acknowledged also required autonomous studying. Colombia A stated that her expectation centered on the country and cultural differences while two other participants stated their expectations were also geared towards the potential difficulties pertaining to Assimilation (Valladolid B) and Language (Valladolid C).

Personality

Valladolid A stated that one of their personality traits was not actively searching for friends and this trait coupled with their personal perception of the native population's reluctance in initiating connections with “foreigners” led her to opt out of interacting with natives. In addition, Valladolid A and C along with Bordeaux B, all stated that they were not very outgoing and, thus, participated in out-of-school activities less frequently.

Anxiety

The majority (5) were very nervous upon arrival, (Valladolid A, Bordeaux B, Martinique A, B, Colombia A) and only four (4) expressed having little to no anxiety (Valladolid B, C, D, Bordeaux A). Valladolid B said they relied on those who accompanied them on the programme to relieve their anxiety while Valladolid A stated that experiencing events, such as venturing the neighbourhood and going to the university for registration, calmed their anxiety.

Social Factors

Adjustment

The majority of SA participants (6) found adjusting difficult (see table 4) and their average adjustment period ranged between 2-3 weeks which delayed their participation in investment activities. Conversely, the minority (Martinique A, B, Bordeaux B) expressed no difficulty in their adjustment which only lasted up to a week even though they were the more nervous participants (see Anxiety).

Table 4

The Type of Adjustment of SA Participants Compared with Their Prior Knowledge and Travel History

Type of Adjustment	Prior Knowledge	Prior Travel History
Difficult (6)	None to a little	5 travelled 1 had no prior travel history
Not Difficult (3)	Little to a lot	1 had no prior travel history 2 travelled

Those who had difficulty in adjusting (6) were mostly uninformed about the region/ country of the SA programme (see table4) whereas the three (3) participants with no difficulty stated that they were sufficiently knowledgeable about the country/region through, club activities and prior research (Bordeaux B), stories about experiences from past participants (Martinique B), and prior trips to the region (Martinique A). Interestingly, five (5) of the six (6) SA participants who stated it was difficult to adjust had also travelled to Non-English-speaking countries prior to the SA programme (see table 4). Four (4) out of the five had even travelled to either Spanish (3) or French (1) speaking countries which coincided with the language profile of their SA programme. Furthermore, those who found it difficult to adjust and, thus, had a longer adjustment period stated reasons as follows:

- It was an initial shock to the reality of their life in a foreign country
- They realized there was “no turning back” to see their family
- Having to rely totally on the L2 from the beginning and throughout their stay
- Having to discover and adapt a new living routine
- Racial prejudice

- Cultural differences

Social Interaction Experience

The participants who frequently interacted with both natives and non-natives relayed no negative social encounters and expressed that natives were amicable and accommodated them by either attempting to facilitate their L2 level of proficiency in conversations or speaking in English all together. However, in the interviews six (6) participants noted some negative/difficult encounters which the majority relayed did not really stop their interactions. Problems encountered included racial prejudice or perceived racial bias (Valladolid A, B, C), natives/locals not opening their friendship circles to foreigners (Valladolid A, Bordeaux B), and adjusting to heavy accent/non-standard accent (Martinique A, Colombia A). Only Valladolid A stated that the combination of her two negative/difficult encounters made her reluctant to have interactions with natives whereas the other five stated these encounters were not impactful to their overall participation. The upcoming chapter embarks on describing the motivation profiles of SA participants and relating them to the SA participants' engagement in investment activities. In addition, it tackles representing the relation between motivation profiles and the frequency of participation.

Chapter Four: Motivation and Investment

Motivation Before Entering SA Programme

The types of motivation profiles were discovered when questioned about the motivation to apply for the programme and the goals set for the programme. It revealed that there existed three profiles: Linguistic Motivation, which were motivations and goals related to improving language skills or immersing into a native environment, Academic Motivation, which was aligned with improving academic performance in the language or benefitting from GPA transfer from the programme, and Personal Motivation, which included travelling and benefitting from personal growth and development on the programme. All were personally motivated, however, five SA participants were more linguistically motivated (Valladolid B, C, Bordeaux A, Martinique B, Colombia A), two SA participants (Valladolid A, Bordeaux B) were more academically motivated, and the remaining two SA participants (Valladolid D, Martinique A) were both linguistically and academically motivated, where they both focused on language improvements outside of and within the academic setting.

Linguistically motivated participants were the majority to participate in out-of-school (4), extracurricular activities (2) (see fig.5), and frequently had interactions with natives (5) and non-natives (5) (see table 5). Conversely, academically motivated participants limitedly engaged in out-of-school (1), extracurricular activities (1) (see fig. 5), and rarely had interactions with natives (1) (see table 5). Even with the inclusion of those who were both linguistically and academically motivated, a higher ratio of those with linguistic motivation participated in investment activities with a higher average frequency than those with academic motivation.

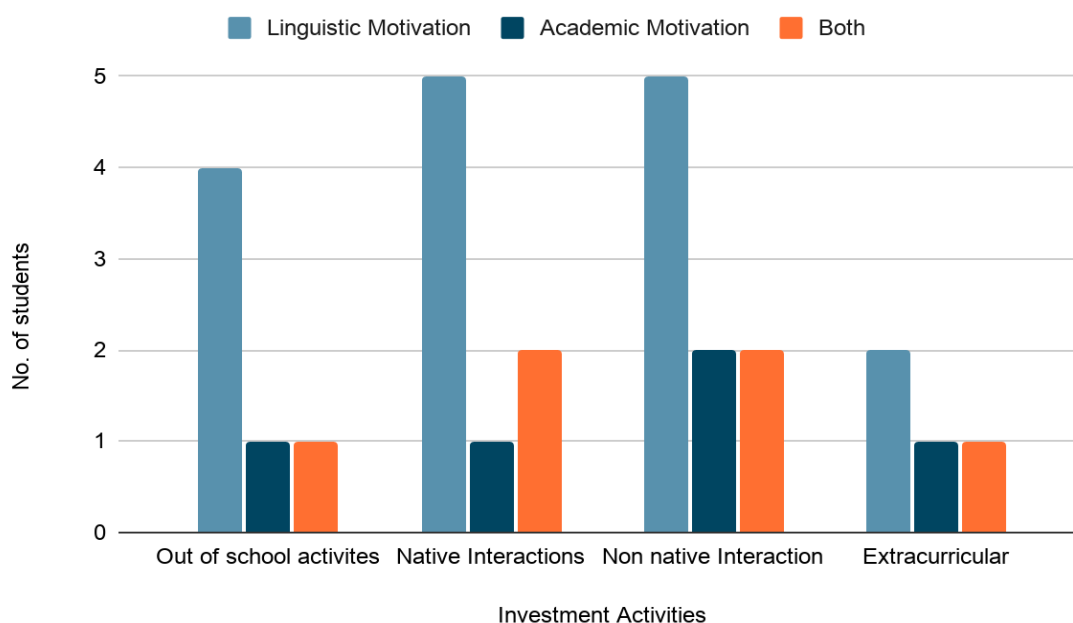


Fig. 5. The participation in investment activities in relation to motivation profiles

Table 5

The Correlation Between Frequency of Interactions and Motivation Profile

Motivation Profile	Frequency of Interaction with natives	Frequency of Interaction with non-natives
Linguistic (5)	High Frequency	High Frequency
Academic (2)	Low Frequency	High and Low Frequency
Both (2)	High and Low Frequency	High Frequency

Motivation During SA Programme

Most participants stated that they were motivated throughout the programme to practice the TL whilst emphasizing that it was more out of necessity.

Yeah, you had no choice because most of the time when you go into these things you have to speak,whether it's at an office to pay a bill or to connect a phone account or to just buy something in a supermarket or to buy something in a store. (Bordeaux B)

Nonetheless, some students stated that this inescapable means of using the TL drove them to grasp more opportunities that forced them to practice even when they began seeing the improvements to their proficiency from these experiences.

...we had to speak all the time, but there definitely wasn't any lack of motivation, everything that we did kind of pushed us to learn more (Colombia A)

However, Martinique B stated that constantly being surrounded by persons practicing or speaking in English demotivated them in their TL practice and they wished to only be surrounded by persons actively speaking in French to them.

Two participants interestingly stated that having to perform in contextually diverse situations, such as having to help translate for other international students on numerous occasions (Valladolid C) or instructing other natives or international students as a trainer in their extracurricular activity (Bordeaux A), helped them to learn communication strategies and practice the language but also gave them confidence to continue seeking more opportunities to practice. In the subsequent chapter, we demonstrate the SA participants' perception on the linguistic improvements, academic differences and benefits gained from their participation in these SA programmes.

Chapter Five: Linguistic Benefits

Perception of Linguistic Improvement

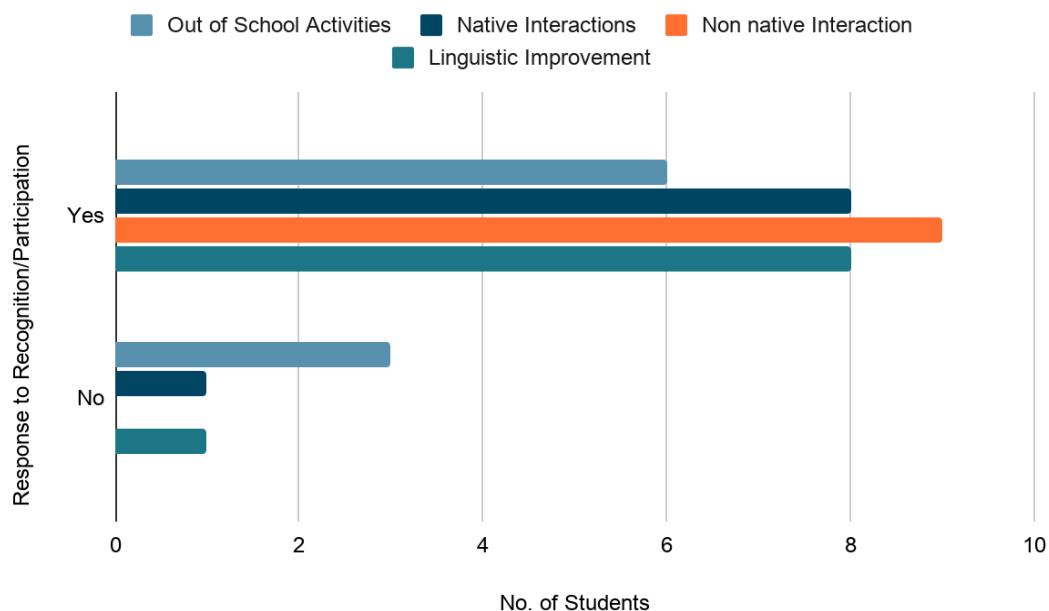


Fig. 6. The recognition of linguistic improvements alongside participation ratios in investment activities

The majority (8) of SA participants perceived and recognized the improvements to their language proficiency from their SA experience. Compared alongside the investment activity participation ratios, it showed that those that actively participated in out-of-school activities and interactions with natives noted improvements. Interactions with non-natives also led towards recognition of improvements since, as mentioned before, participants practiced the L2 as a common language of communication among non-natives. Furthermore, the lack of recognition of

improvement by Valladolid A was linked to their lack of interaction with natives and participation in out-of-school activities.

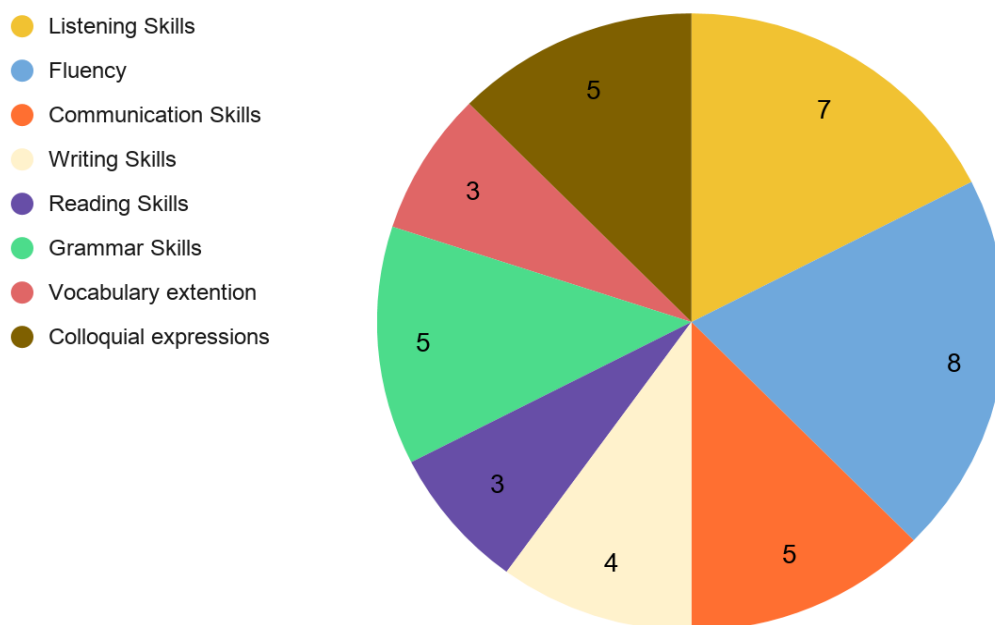


Fig. 7. The linguistic aspects that were perceived to have improved by SA participants

The major skills noted amongst SA participants to have improved related to fluency and listening skills and this was linked to the compulsory nature of practicing these skills in and out of the school setting. Other skills included communication skills, use of colloquial expressions and grammar skills, whereas only a few noted improvements in technical skills such as writing and reading since, as they stated, they only practiced these skills within the academic setting.

Perception of Academic Improvements and Language Learning Improvements Upon Return

Most SA participants (6) saw improvements in their academic performance upon return from the SA programme, whereas 3 SA participants (Bordeaux A, B, Valladolid A) stated that there was no change, but indicating that their grades before attending the programme were not low, so there being no change was not a negative reflection on their academic performance. With reference to language learning, the majority of SA participants (7) stated that their experiences made it easier to study languages in their home institution upon return. However, the remaining two participants (Valladolid A, Martinique A) stated they were uncertain if their SA experiences contributed to easier language learning upon return. In the following chapter, the findings presented in chapters two through five are analyzed and discussed and correlations are made between relevant factors and their impacts on the participation and the frequencies of participation in each of the four investment activities.

Chapter Six: Discussion and Findings

Participation in Courses

Courses provided the academic setting to the SA programmes and acknowledged the need for a learning context for successful SLA, however, the study showed that there was a low emphasis in the necessary training ground for L2 learning from the programmes' perspective given the external provision of language courses to students and the deliberate equivalence of Language courses to Linguistics courses. This training ground as mentioned by Ndhlovu (150) was an important factor to students who claimed that the language courses, although provided in a private institution, were beneficial to their language development and to those whose motivational profiles were geared towards academically excelling in the language course. Hence, the official enrolment of Language courses in the SA programme would satisfy not only this important training ground for students but better reflect their course equivalents and align with their goals.

Nonetheless, the higher enrolment in general courses (non-language courses), as noted by Campbell (735), did coincide with a higher and more frequent access to native speakers. However, the beneficial influence of these general courses towards students' practice of the TL were impeded by certain characteristics of the class experience. The heavy use of oral instruction in the TL, although improving the listening skills, when accompanied by a lack of visual aid, negatively affected students' understanding and performance in those classes. This thereby led students to their international companions in an attempt to help each other catch up and/or understand the content of the course rather than towards the native population. The reduced interactive nature also impeded students' active use of the TL in classrooms by reducing

opportunities for interaction using the TL. In addition, a perceived culture of native students' reluctance to foreigners, as highlighted in Campbell's study (736, 739), reduced not only the possibilities/situations for contact but also one student's desire for interaction with natives within the academic setting (Valladolid A). These were analyzed as the consequences of courses catering only to native students, given that students claimed courses or more specifically classes that catered to international students were easier to perform in and more preferred even with the high ratio of native students. Thus, it highlighted that the more important element of classes and courses was the level of attention placed on international students in terms of the manner of teaching and the content and teaching tools, regardless of the ratio of students.

Participation in Extracurricular Activities

Extracurricular activities, as stated by Campbell (736), were beneficial in providing SA participants with interactional opportunities with native speakers and even beneficially impacted the growth of vocabulary. However, the low preference among SA participants for extracurricular activities to other activities, even though the majority had linguistic motivation and could benefit from the interaction within extracurricular activities, highlighted a restrictive quality of these activities. These activities were highly dependent on one's likes and were strictly done in the university; hence, these characteristics made the selection very limited for the voluntary participation among SA participants.

Participation in Out-of-school Activities

The comparatively high participation rate in out-of-school activities to extracurricular activities demonstrated out-of-school activities as a preferred communicative context for SA participants given the diverse selection of activities by SA students. These diverse activities acknowledged more contextually diverse communicative contexts, which was a crucial factor in the studies by Hammerly (398) and Hernández (650) towards successful SLA. Despite this notion, the frequent participation in these activities and the active practice of the TL were still influenced by certain factors. For instance, as highlighted by Roberts (24), racial bias/prejudice was acknowledged to deter Valladolid A and B's participation in these activities. On the other hand, friendships with either natives or non-natives and the international student communities played an important role by explicitly introducing SA participants to these activities in which many eventually participated. This highlighted both Ingram's notion of the importance of programme factors, such as the international student community, to guide and ensure participation in activities within the host culture (216) and friendships as a key element to encourage participation in these activities. Yet, despite having been introduced to the activities, a non-outgoing personality was recognized to counteract opportunities and either reduce frequent participation or deter participation in general.

However, an open-minded attitude, expressed through open expectations, encouraged SA students to participate in investment activities and, coupled with an informed status of the country, played a role in early participation by ensuring a quicker and less difficult adjustment period. Furthermore, this early adjustment, noted only in SA participants who had an open-minded attitude/expectation and were informed on the country/host culture, emphasized these

factors as helpful tools that, hence, prepared the individual for the challenges in developing a new identity in the country as highlighted in Schuman's model. It also emphasized unhelpful factors such as prior travel to a linguistically similar country which, given their touristic nature, did not contribute to the development of an identity specific to the SA programme and host culture. Nonetheless, difficult adjustment, resulting from a combination of a lack of information and an open-minded attitude as well as the presence of anxiety, even though delaying the eventual participation of SA participants in these activities, was aided by friendship formation with native and/or non-natives as a method to relieve their anxiety and adjust to the new environment, a pertinent element noted by Campbell (742, 743) and Lybeck (150).

Thus, this eventual adjustment and, subsequent participation emphasized Schumann's theory (Schumann 385) that most students who either adjusted quickly or had longer adjustment periods participated in investment activities only after having successfully adjusted to the environment and developed their identity in the SA programme and host culture. However, this type of identity, i.e., a participant in an SA programme, may have influenced the rather infrequent participation in out-of-school activities given the short-term nature of the identity in the host culture. This in turn may have prompted them to invest little time in out-of-school activities as they did not see themselves residing or becoming part of the local community for the long term. This aligned with Kong's concept of multiple identities and its importance towards investment (698, 699).

Interaction with natives vs non-natives

Given that in the study the majority did interact with natives and non-natives, the one anomaly to the study, Valladolid A, and her experience highlighted the negative impact of the combination of inhibiting factors on the interaction with natives. Her non-outgoing personality, her initial experiences with racial prejudice alongside the perceived native reluctance to non-natives really deterred her interaction and friendship with natives and further fostered her interaction with non-natives. This showed the interrelation of factors, a potential trend that should be acknowledged to avoid the development of other issues that deter interactions with the native population.

On the other hand, accommodation type was proven an imminent characteristic in friendship formation and interaction as identified by Campbell (733, 734), and likewise to her analysis, the accommodation in international student dorms and off-campus accommodation fostered interactions and friendship development with non-natives than with the native population, which may have resulted in the SA participants with differing frequency in interaction between the two groups to have a higher frequency of interactions with non-natives. This led to the belief that the ease of access to international students and rather lack of access to natives in these accommodations may have structured friendships with non-natives early on and, hence, proved as a hindrance towards frequent interactions with non-natives, even though it did not deter overall interactions with natives.

Furthermore, the negative or difficult class experience led students to international students instead of native students, therefore, highlighting a factor whereby classes accommodating international students were possibly a better environment to promote

interactions with natives. Another factor that played a role in the interactions profiles was the accompaniment of home institution students on the programme. Martinique B having attended the programme alone and coupled with factors such as an easy adjustment period, prompted his early interaction with native speakers, whereas Valladolid A relied heavily on her companions from their home institution and, thus, did not interact with natives.

Role of Motivation

It was acknowledged that linguistic motivation was a key element to the overall participation in out-of-school and extracurricular activities and interactions with natives and non-natives, however, the study was unable to indicate which specific motivation profile was more beneficial to a higher frequency of participation in these activities given the mixture of profiles from the participation ratios.

Linguistic Benefits

These programmes overall provided SA participants with vast linguistic improvements, contributed to academic improvements or continuation of good academic performance, and even made it easier to learn the language upon return. Nonetheless, these improvements were due to the SA participants eventual engagement in the various investment activities once coming to terms with and overcoming most of these inhibiting factors experienced throughout the programme, as mentioned by Jones and Bonds (27). Therefore, those that did not conquer these inhibiting factors, such as Valladolid A who was deterred and allowed these factors to inhibit her overall participation, were led with little improvements noticed on their return. It should also be

noted that one enhancing element to the students' interaction was not only their interaction with natives but also with non-natives which was carried out in the TL being the common language for communication. As such, their contribution to the students' perceived improvements was also acknowledged given that it led to the active practice in the TL.

Conclusion

The SA experience is certainly advantageous to the SLA of L2 students given its immersive quality into the TL culture and the native community, alongside the inclusion of a formal academic setting, but it can be even more advantageous through the elimination and prevention of certain inhibiting factors and the inclusion of certain promoting factors. The study reflected that promotion of formal equivalent L2 courses in the host institution along with the accommodation of international students in the teaching of other non-language equivalent courses may promote the interaction with natives and the practice of the TL in classes. On the other hand, omitting L2 equivalent courses in the university setting and incorporating difficult course teaching strategies such as fast use of L2 as instruction and lack of technological/visual aid in classes limit both the L2 learning and academic performance of SA participants and foster interactions and dependence on international/non-native peers.

Furthermore, the accommodation type helps to provide a foundation to the friendships and initial encounters of the SA participants which may further initiate and encourage their participation in out-of-school activities. Other influential factors included promoting personal factors such as being linguistically motivated which prompted the active participation in investment activities, also being open minded and knowledgeable on the host country/culture which ensured quicker adjustment and earlier participation in investment activities. On the opposite spectrum are inhibiting personal factors such non-outgoing personalities which prevented active participation in out-of-school activities and negative perceptions, developed from racial bias/prejudice or perceived native reluctance to foreigner interactions, which

inhibited eventual participation in activities with natives and rather promoted a reliance on non-natives.

Additionally, the concept of the SA participants' identity in these programmes was a crucial element for the selection of activities in which SA participants invest their time and efforts and the frequency of these investments. Tools that aided the preparation and development of the identity as a member of the SA programme in a host country, such as extensive knowledge on the country or accounts from past participants, also benefited the early participation in activities. Although, the short-term nature of this identity as a participant in the SA programme as compared to a longer-term identity as a member of the host country/culture may have impeded decisions of frequent participation in the host culture.

Lastly, friendships, with either natives or non-natives, were a beneficial element in overcoming these inhibiting factors and promoting the active participation of SA participants in the activities within the host culture which eventually led to the various improvements noticed to their SLA, such as oral fluency, communicative and listening improvements, and language learning. Factors that seemed to have little to no impact on SA participants' engagement and frequency of participation included the length of time of the programme, anxiety levels, and the ratio of native students to international students in classes.

Recommendations

To begin, it is necessary to assure a recognition of international students in the operations of the host universities and the delivery of their courses to avoid negatively affecting the academic experience and performance of SA participants in the foreign university. It would also be beneficial if the orientation session, dedicated to participants prior to their departure, included or increased the personal recounts from past participants about their experiences (negative or positive) as it did prove beneficial to the adjustment in the SA programme. Hence, this is recommended to provide a balanced platform of information to the participants and help sufficiently prepare the SA participants by introducing them not only to the elements of the country and its culture but also to the details of the SA experience with the aim of avoiding difficult adjustment periods, shortening their overall adjustment period, and promoting earlier participation in the SA programme.

Additionally, a helpful strategy to promote the immediate interactions and involvement with the native community would be the promotion of lodgings with a higher access to native speakers, such as host families or a mixed students' dorm or accommodations with an overall higher population of native residents. This could be achieved through the host institutions intervention in the allocation or direct provision of such accommodations to the incoming SA students. Lastly, it would be beneficial to implement more SA programmes, specifically in the language degrees provided by the UWI, with effective management and consideration of these factors to attain the maximum level of linguistic benefits for each participant.

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Appendix A

Sample Interview Questions

Good day, my name is Celeste Alexander, a final year student at the University of the West Indies, completing my final year thesis aimed at investigating the impacts of the experience in a Study Abroad Programme towards Second Language Acquisition. I would first like to start by seeking your consent to record this session as a means of storing and accessing the data for my data collection and analysis. This session will consist of 13 questions which are aimed at assessing detailed responses to your Study Abroad experience.

1. Before taking the study abroad programme, what influenced you to apply?
2. Did you have any goals for this study abroad programme?
3. Did you have background knowledge of the country before attending the programme?
4. Did you have any expectations before going?
5. How was the adjustment period and how long did it last?
6. What was the structure of your classes to which you were enrolled and was it similar to UWI?
7. How was the ratio of international students to native students in your classes?
8. What type of classes did you register for?
9. Explain a little about any out of class experiences that you had?
10. Were you motivated or interested to practice the language outside of the classroom setting?
11. What types of improvements or changes did you notice in your listening, speaking, writing , reading, intercultural communication, use of grammar skills?

12. What problems did you encounter in your interactions with natives in school or out of school?
13. What studying or learning strategies did you adapt to from the programme, and did you apply these strategies to your study in UWI when you returned?

Appendix B

Questionnaire

This questionnaire, created by the researcher, Celeste Alexander, a third year UWI student pursuing a BA in Spanish minoring in Linguistics, is designed as a means of data collection for the Final Year Project. The questionnaire intends to collect data related to the experience of Study Abroad participants, specifically pertaining to the activities, participation and feelings towards the overall experience. It consists of a total of 30 questions (a mixture of multiple choice and open ended) and is estimated to take 20 minutes to complete. The data from this questionnaire will only be used for research purposes and will only be used by the researcher for the writing of the research paper for the course HUMN3099. All information will be anonymized in the representation of data in the research paper.

1. Have you participated in a Study Abroad Program offered by UWI during your time of study?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

2. What year did you participate?

- ☐ 14-15
- ☐ 15-16
- ☐ 16-17
- ☐ 17-18
- ☐ 18-19
- ☐ Other

3. To which country and at what university did you participate?

4. What was your major and/or minor of study at UWI?

5. How long was the exchange program?

- ☐ 3 months
- ☐ 6 months
- ☐ 9 months
- ☐ Other

6. What type of accommodation did you have?

- ☐ Living with Host Family
- ☐ International student dorm
- ☐ Off-campus Accommodation
- ☐ Other

7. Where was your accommodation located?

8. On a scale of 1-10, How nervous were you upon arrival?

9. Was it difficult adjusting when you arrived in the country and / or university of the program?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

10. Did you participate in any extracurricular activities or clubs offered by the university?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

11. If yes to no. 10, What types of extracurricular activities or clubs did you participate in?

12. Did the program offer any peer or buddy support to help international students settle in?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

13. Were you able to form any friendships with native speakers?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

14. Were you able to interact with native speakers in your classes to which you were enrolled?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

15. Were you able to interact with native speakers outside of classes

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

16. How many times a week would you interact with native speakers, in and out of school?

- ☐ 1-2 times
- ☐ 3-4 times
- ☐ 5-6 times
- ☐ everyday

17. Did you interact with native English speakers

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

18. If yes, how many times a week would you interact with them?

- ☐ 1-2 times
- ☐ 3-4 times
- ☐ 5-6 times
- ☐ everyday

19. Did you form friendships with other international students or native English speakers?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

20. Did you participate in any out-of-school activities?

☐ Yes

☐ No

21. What type of out of school activities did you participate in?

22. How often did you participate in these activities?

1

2

3

4

5

6

7

8

9

10

Twice a month

everyday

23. Have you ever travelled to a non-native English-speaking country before the study abroad program?

☐ Yes

☐ No

24. If yes, to which country and for how long did you stay?

25. Upon return to UWI, did you notice any improvements in your language proficiency?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not sure

26. If Yes, in what linguistic aspects? (Fluency, Listening Skills, Grammar, Literacy skills, Writing skills, Use of more complex sentences, Use of more complex structures, Idiomatic expressions)

27. If Yes, in what personal aspects? (Motivation, Confidence, Participation)

28. Did your grade reflect these differences from your experiences? (Any improvements or did they remain the same?)

29. Did the experience make studying the language easier when you returned?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Not sure

30. On a scale of 1-10, How much did you enjoy your experience?
