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Native English Speakers' Second Language Learning Choices,
Motivation, and Persistence During Postsecondary Education

A thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree Master of Arts
in Applied Linguistics

by

Kamaal Ahsan Majeed

2013

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Native English Speakers' Second Language Learning Choices,
Motivation, and Persistence During Postsecondary Education

by

Kamaal Ahsan Majeed

Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics

University of California, Los Angeles, 2013

Professor Katrina Daly Thompson, Chair

The purpose of this study is to explore the sources of motivation to learn a second language (L2) among first language (L1) speakers of English in the United States. College students are the specific focus, due to the foreign language study requirements that are imposed on so many of them at the secondary and postsecondary school levels. This study was conducted using oral interviews with current college undergraduates who have already fulfilled their colleges' language requirements. These students were asked questions regarding their previous exposure to second languages prior to postsecondary studies, the language choices they made in order to satisfy requirements at their college/university, and their decision to continue or stop studying second languages beyond the number of language courses required by their colleges, as well as the basis for their second language learning decisions.

The goals of this study included determining what factors influence the decisions of L1 English speakers to continue or discontinue studying an L2, as well as why they chose to study the particular languages they did to complete their college's requirement. The data show a preference for studying commonly taught languages in high school, and for choosing to continue studying the language they began studying in high school in college. Also, sources of instrumental motivation comprised the motivation that the majority of the participants had for studying a language. All of the students who showed stronger integrative motivation, however, were far more likely to continue studying beyond their language requirement. There were more non-continuing than continuing students, and the most notable reason for not continuing was the need to complete major/minor and general education requirements. The results suggest that most undergraduate students view their language requirement as an obstacle between themselves and their Bachelor's degrees, rather than as a gateway to extensive L2 studies, and choose the fastest and most convenient method of overcoming that obstacle.

The small scale and scope of this study, a first foray into this topic, invites further research, in order to have greater implications for 1) L2 education at the secondary and postsecondary levels, and 2) how language curricula and requirements can be modified to better serve the needs of L1 English-speaking students.

The thesis of Kamaal Ahsan Majeed is approved.

John H. Schumann

Marianne Celce-Murcia

Katrina Daly Thompson, Committee Chair

University of California, Los Angeles

2013

*To Santita,
my mother and best friend – I dedicate not only
this thesis, but my entire life's work, to you*

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I. INTRODUCTION AND STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

In recent decades, English has emerged as a world *lingua franca*. For many people who have not already gained a native-like command of English, English is one of the most important foreign languages to learn. However, for those whose first language (L1) is English or who are otherwise already fluent English users, such as many of the students attending college in the United States, the decision of which L2 – second language, or, (for the purposes of the current study) language not learned as an L1 – to learn is not as clear. There are arguments in favor of learning several specific languages other than English, which can change based on variables such as the demographics of the region a prospective learner lives in, his or her heritage, career goals, and the availability of instruction for a given language. Therefore, no L2 appears to be more advantageous for the entire population of L1 English speakers to learn compared to others. Further, because of the emergence of English as a major international language in commerce, government, education, and entertainment, an L1 English speaker may not see being multilingual as an exceptionally necessary endeavor. In an effort to expose students to additional languages and promote second language acquisition (SLA), high schools and universities maintain foreign language requirements. However, this requirement may not actually lead to study of an L2 by L1 English speakers beyond required courses, let alone lead to fluency in an L2. Why, then, do some L1 English speakers continue studying an L2 beyond the requirement?

The current study has determined some sources of motivation for current college students who are L1 English speakers, for continuing to learn a specific L2 after they have completed all compulsory L2 coursework. This study also examines the influence of mandatory language requirements in high school and college degree programs on the nature of these students' motivation for SLA. After presenting the results of the study, I discuss questions about college

L2 education policies that are suggested by my findings and could potentially be answered by future research, as well as several avenues for further related research.

II. BACKGROUND

A. Motivation and (second) language learning

Scholarly inquiries on the relationship between motivation and language learning date back to 1941, when David Jordan, in a study of student attitudes toward school subjects, found a strong correlation between student attitudes toward French and the grades they earned in their French classes (Jordan, 1941). Lambert then conducted one of the first studies on attitudes, motivation, and second language acquisition (SLA) in 1955 (Gardner, 1991). The correlation found in 1959 by Lambert and Gardner (as cited in Gardner, 1991) between L2 learning motivation and proficiency launched countless other studies of language learning attitudes, motivation, proficiency, persistence, and education.

Motivation, as it relates to language learning, has come to be defined as “the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language” (Gardner, 1985, p. 10). Noels (2001) discusses in detail four types of motivation: intrinsic motivation, based on personal interest; extrinsic motivation, based on external reasons, and not personal interest; integrative motivation, based on wanting to communicate and associate with users of the target language; and instrumental motivation, due to an outside circumstance that compels or requires the language to be learned. Gardner (2001), focusing on integrative motivation, then proposed a model that named integrative motivation, language aptitude, and “other factors” as the necessary components for language learning achievement (p. 5). Some studies, such as Kormos & Cziér’s (2008) study of Hungarian high school students, college students, and other adult learners studying English, showed that

motivation became more instrumental and less integrative as the students grew older in age and moved higher in grade level. However, the findings of a much larger number of studies corroborate the validity of Gardner's (2001) model, with links between integrative motivation and all of the significant "other factors" that were discovered in those studies. I discuss a number of these studies below.

For example, Cziér and Dörnyei's (2005) study of Hungarian children in their early teens revealed that, as proposed in Gardner's (2001) model, integrative motivation forms a core part of language learners' language learning beliefs. Integrative motivation is the key to students' persistence in their language learning endeavors (Ramage, 1990; Hernandez, 2006; Peters, 2010), and has been linked with higher proficiency achievements in the target language (Hernandez, 2006). Further, integrative motivation has been proven to strengthen as students gain more experience studying the language (Matsumoto & Obana, 2001; Mandell, 2002). Integrative motivation also appears to be a function of the prospective target language. In Williams et al.'s (2002) study of high school children learning German and French in England, the students showed a much stronger integrative motivation for learning German than for learning French.

Another significant factor in determining both sources of integrative motivation in particular and sources of motivation for language learning in general, is the gender of the learner. Mori and Gobel's (2006) study of Japanese students of English showed that the female students had stronger integrative motivation. Similarly, Williams et al.'s (2002) study showed that the female learners of both German and French had higher levels of intrinsic motivation than their male counterparts. Additional studies have shown that females have better overall attitudes (Kobayashi, 2002) toward and stronger overall motivation for (Shaaban & Ghaith, 2000)

learning a second language. These studies featured high school students and/or adults, but others have shown that males' and females' language learning motivation levels can start to differ as early as elementary school. For example, Sung and Padilla's (1998) research showed that, among a group of elementary school students that were being given regular L2 instruction, the female students were more strongly integratively motivated to learn the language.

Language placement exam results also play a role in student language learning motivation. According to the results of Shaaban and Ghaith's (2000) study, students who took a university English placement exam and placed into a lower-level course displayed stronger integrative motivation than the students who placed into a higher-level course. It is possible that the students who placed into a higher-level course expected to do well enough on the placement exam to "place out," or waive the language requirement, and were therefore disappointed about having to take additional language courses.

Much of the current body of literature has focused on integrative motivation, and where students fall on the spectrum of strength of integrative motivation to learn a language. How much of a role does instrumental motivation have, though, in students' language studies? Is it more common to have stronger instrumental or integrative motivation prior to beginning study of that language in school? The literature has shown that integrative motivation strengthens as more experience and proficiency is gained in learning the language, but does a student's integrative motivation for language study eventually become stronger than his/her instrumental motivation? Overall, there has been much less of a focus on the role of instrumental motivation in previous studies.

The current study provides more of a focus on the role of instrumental motivation in addition to the role of integrative motivation in students' language studies. By exclusively

featuring interviews students who needed to fulfill a language requirement in order to graduate from their college, this study examines the influence of such required study on students' language learning. Using data about the students' attitudes toward studying the language they chose to study prior to, during, and following their efforts toward satisfaction of the requirement, this study reveals whether students develop sources of motivation other than the language requirement – a source of instrumental motivation – during their language studies.

B. The L1 English speaker's L2 dilemma

Many published studies (e.g. Shaaban & Ghaith, 2000; Kobayashi, 2002; Mori & Gobel, 2006, Kormos & Cziér, 2008) and language learning autobiographies (e.g. Schumann, 1999) have shown that students whose L1 is not English often choose to learn English as an L2. In the case of Shaaban and Ghaith's study, many English language learners (ELLs) even aspire to move on to attend colleges where English is the primary language of instruction. Such high international interest among L1 speakers of other languages in acquiring English underscores the importance of English as a global language.

However, there does not appear to be such a consensus on a language that is more important to learn than others for students who are L1 English speakers and students at institutions where English is the primary language of instruction. Studies have been conducted that feature high school and college students in the above-named group who are studying Spanish (Frey & Sadek, 1971; Ramage, 1990; Mandell, 2002; Shedivy, 2004; Peters, 2010), French (Ramage; Noels et al., 2000; Williams et al., 2002; Newbill & Jones, 2012), German (Williams et al.), Japanese (Samimy & Tabuse, 1992; Sung & Padilla, 1998; Matsumoto & Obana, 2001; Kato et al., 2007), Cantonese, Mandarin, and Korean (Sung & Padilla). Published language learning autobiographies show a comparable amount of variety of L2 choices among

L1 English speakers in particular (e.g. Schumann, 1999; Tse, 2002). Even when expanding the scope to include students in Anglophone countries other than the United States, the languages chosen still vary, with German, French, and Japanese being represented across England, Australia and Canada (Noels et al., Matsumoto & Obana, Williams et al.). Due to this wide variety in L2 choices, studies such as those by Dörnyei and Clément (2001) and Price and Gascoigne (2001) have examined factors that lead learners to choose one language over another. Pre-conceived attitudes toward a language and/or its associated cultures (later corroborated in Williams et al.'s 2002 study), perceived difficulty in learning a language, perceived likelihood of sustaining interest in a language, potential financial gain, and influence of family and friends all proved to be determining factors in these learners' language selections.

As shown in the literature to date, L1 English speakers have chosen different L2s to learn while in school, with nearly as many reasons for choosing a language as there are language offerings from which to choose. However, is there any one L2 that L1 English speakers believe is more worthwhile to study than all of the others? Does that one language differ depending on the country or region where the student lives or studies? Though scholars have focused on students of specific L2s and students in specific parts of the world, none of the studies have named any L2(s) as more worthwhile to study than other L2s. Also, although there have been many studies of non-English L2s, it is unclear whether the studies' participants speak English as an L1 or not.

The current study aims to determine the language that L1 English speaking students view as ideal to study in college, if such a language exists. As this study is not limited to students of a specific L2, the data naturally reveals if there is a consensus as to the best non-English L2 to study. Also, by not limiting the body of participants to students at one school or even one

region, the data from this study reveals if there is one non-English L2 that is universally worth studying, or if that L2 varies depending on the region of the world where one lives or studies. However, by exclusively interviewing students who are L1 English speakers, the desire that many L1 speakers of other languages have to learn English does not skew the data from this study.

C. Secondary institutions, postsecondary institutions, and language requirements

Dating back long before even Jordan's (1941) foray into language learning studies, schools have offered foreign language classes, and, often starting in high school, students have had foreign language requirements imposed on them as part of their school's curriculum. In response to the early work highlighted in Gardner (1991) and the determination of four main varieties of language learning motivation (Noels, 2001), numerous studies have focused on student motivation in the context of foreign language requirements in high schools and colleges. By nature of the requirements, students must at least have instrumental and extrinsic motivation, provided they are certain they want to earn their degree. But do they have any motivation to continue beyond the language requirement? Are there students who are more likely than others to persist in their foreign language studies?

Kormos & Cziér's (2008) study of high school students, college students, and (older) adult language learners showed strong integrative motivation in the high school students, and strong instrumental motivation in the two older groups. Williams et al.'s (2002) study of high school students determined that the students in higher grade levels had weaker integrative motivation than the students in the lower grade levels. Also, the elementary school language learners in Sung and Padilla's (1998) study showed stronger overall motivation than the high school students to learn an L2. When the results of these studies are considered together with the

findings on integrative motivation (Ramage, 1990; Matsumoto & Obana, 2001; Mandell, 2002; Cziér & Dörnyei, 2005; Hernandez, 2006; Peters, 2010) and gender and motivation (Sung & Padilla; Shaaban & Ghaith, 2000; Kobayashi, 2002; Williams et al.; Mori & Gobel, 2006), one could expect that: a) motivation of any kind will decrease with age, b) females will have higher motivation than males, and c) integrative motivation will be what ultimately leads students to continue studying a language beyond their school's requirement. However, these conclusions are not universally applicable to the set of studies of high school students or the set of studies of college students.

The set of studies that were conducted with high school student participants (Ramage; Sung & Padilla; Williams et al.; Shedivy, 2004; Kormos & Cziér; Peters), showed no uniformly definitive evidence of a link between gender and language learning persistence. However, all of the studies showed that the numbers of students studying beyond their language requirements fell sharply from the numbers of students in the required language classes, signaling a second, inverse relationship, between language learning motivation and age/grade level. In addition, participants in these studies who continued studying past the language requirements cited integrative motivation as their incentive to continue.

At the postsecondary level, however, there are additional factors to consider before developing a hypothesis about who (if anyone) will continue studying beyond the language requirement. Many college students have some formal exposure to an L2 before college, and therefore have already developed judgments about their own ability to succeed in foreign language studies (Ushioda, 2001), as well as goals and expectations for their foreign language courses (Magnan et al., 2012). For some of these students, their goal is to “place out” or “test out” of their college's language requirement by taking placement exams that colleges often offer

to students already proficient in a language (from high school or elsewhere) other than the college's primary language of instruction. However, when students take a placement exam and place at a high level, but not high enough to "place out," their motivation for studying the language in question is adversely affected (Shabban & Ghaith, 2000). Colleges and universities also tend to have a much larger selection of less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) – defined by Magnan et al. (2012) and the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (2013) as languages other than English, Spanish, French, or German – relative to high schools (Samimy & Tabuse, 1992). These selections of LCTLs initially attract college students, especially those students who were never had LCTL courses offered to them in high school; however, they also have much higher rates of attrition (even before students complete their language requirement) because of the difficulty of many LCTLs due to linguistic difference from English (Samimy & Tabuse, 1992). Moore (2005) asserts a relationship between ethnicity and college L2 course enrollments, indicating that there are low numbers of African-Americans in foreign language courses due to many institutions' "failure to include an Afro-centric perspective in instruction, and to teach languages spoken in Africa" (p. 192). Even the setting of the institution of study (urban, suburban, or rural) has been proven to influence whether or not students continue studying a given L2, either before or upon completing their college's requirement (Kato et al., 2007). Finally, as Price and Gascogne (2006) demonstrate, annoyance with the idea of college language requirements in general can be a deciding factor in students' college language learning persistence.

The existing literature lays out many possible factors that can influence language learning attitudes, motivation and persistence at the college level. However, which of these many factors do students actually cite for having ultimately continued or not continued beyond the language

requirement *after* having completed it? After having completed the requirement and having had the opportunity to reflect on the entire process of doing so, how do students articulate the development of and changes in their attitudes toward L2 coursework?

Although several scholars – including Frey and Sadek (1971), Samimy and Tabuse (1992), Shabban and Ghaith (2000), Ushioda (2001), Mandell (2002), Hernandez (2006), Price and Gascoigne (2006), and Kato et al. (2007) – have studied college student attitudes, motivation, and success while completing their language requirement, we know little about college student persistence *following* completion of the language requirement. Noels et al.’s (2000) and Newbill and Jones’ (2012) studies of college students who were studying French as an L2 beyond their language requirement did lead to some evidence of a connection between language learning motivation (both integrative and instrumental) and persistence. However, because the body of participants included students of only one L2, it is impossible to make that connection generalizable for all languages learned as L2s, or even a “family” of those languages (such as the Romance languages or the Germanic languages). Furthermore, many of the additional factors described above (such as placement exams, LCTL course offerings, learner ethnicity, school setting, and attitudes toward required language study) that can influence language learning motivation at the college level were not explored in the studies by Noels et. al and Newbill and Jones. In addition, the Noels et al. study is the only one that was limited to L1 English speakers, leaving us with very little insight on the L2 study decisions that L1 English speakers make in the context of English’s current world *lingua franca* status.

D. The current study: Language learning choices, motivation, and persistence

The current study is an inquiry into L1 English-speaking college students’ L2 learning choices, motivation for making those choices, and persistence in studying L2s in the face of their

schools' language requirements. It is designed to expand upon the work of Noels et al (2000) and Newbill and Jones (2012) by providing more insight into: a) the languages that L1 English speaking college students feel are worthwhile L2 endeavors, b) motivation (integrative or instrumental, intrinsic or extrinsic) and other factors (specifically, the ones that were previously seen only in college students) behind these judgments, and c) if these students feel L2 learning is worthwhile to them at all after completing their college's language requirement.

The choice of the qualitative oral interview format for this study was made in order to provide more substantive insight into these topics (compared to the less personal questionnaire and Likert scale answer formats of Noels et al.'s (2000) study, Newbill and Jones' (2012) study, and many others). While the different groups of participants in the literature reviewed here share some or most of the characteristics sought out in the participants for the current study, they do not share all of the same characteristics; for example, some studies were limited to students of a particular L2 or set of L2s, while other studies were not limited to L1 speakers of English.

Additional factors – including gender, age, and pre-conceived notions about certain languages/cultures, which all proved to be significant in the data collected in previous studies (Sung & Padilla, 1998; Shabban & Ghaith 2000; Kobayashi, 2002; Williams et al., 2002; Mori & Gobel, 2006; Price & Gascoigne, 2006) – will also be discussed as they relate to the data collected in this study.

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study aims to address some of the questions that have not yet been answered regarding language learning motivation in school, despite the vast body of scholarly literature on the topic.

What languages are L1 English speakers choosing to study in high school and college? As L1 English speakers, they are already fluent users of a language with world *lingua franca* status, but there is little insight into which other languages (if any) they consider to be worth studying. Also, what is their motivation for the specific choices they made? They could have stronger instrumental motivation, because they do not find it personally important to learn an L2, but because of the many professional opportunities that being a monolingual English speaker provides, they may have stronger integrative motivation for learning an L2.

As these students are fulfilling their college's foreign language requirement, do they intend to pursue L2 study beyond the required number of semesters/quarters? The students may intend to study or not study beyond their language requirement prior to beginning their work on the requirement, but the language classroom experiences they have as they satisfy their requirement may change their attitudes. Also, do they actually end up studying beyond the requirement? Some students may intend to study beyond their requirement by the time they finish their requirement, but, despite their intentions, they may not end up persisting in their language studies to that extent. Finally, what is the reasoning for continuing or not continuing beyond the required amount of coursework? If other factors besides not wanting to continue beyond the requirement prevent students from completing further language coursework, it is important to determine what those factors are.

The research questions that the current study aims to answer appear in the form of a list below:

1. What languages are L1 English speakers choosing to study in high school and in college? What is their motivation for the specific choices they made?

2. As they are fulfilling their college's foreign language requirement, do they intend to pursue L2 study beyond the required number of semesters/quarters? Do they actually end up studying beyond the requirement? What is their reasoning for continuing or not continuing beyond the required amount of coursework?

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Participant selection criteria and sources

For this study, I sought out current undergraduates who have satisfied their college's language requirement, and whose first language is English. Undergraduates from two-year and four-year colleges were eligible to participate. They could have satisfied their college's language requirement using high school course credit, Advanced Placement (AP) or Interbaccalaureate (IB) examination credit, course credit from a college other than their current college, a placement examination score from their current college, or coursework from their current college.

However, they must have had some sort of graduation requirement that could be satisfied by the completion of 2-4 semesters, or 3-6 quarters, of college language study, or an equivalent deemed appropriate by the relevant faculty and/or administrative staff at their college. For the purposes of the study, a first language speaker of English is a fluent English speaker who has been exposed to English since early childhood, outside of school and *before* starting school.

Beyond these criteria, I sought out participants from a wide variety of backgrounds. I contacted eligible students studying in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, and several states in the United States, and asked them to participate. The group of eligible students I contacted was also diverse with regard to gender and age, with the expectation of being able to respond to previous, similar studies that were based on one or more of these factors in relation to language learning. I also asked eligible students that were previously in

classes taught by me and by other colleagues, as well as friends of relatives and friends of mine on various social media platforms, to participate in this study. (No current students of mine or of my colleagues were asked to participate.) Finally, I asked the students I contacted to inform anyone they knew who would be eligible for the study, regardless of whether they themselves ended up participating.

B. About the study and its participants

A total of twenty-six students participated in this study. Twenty students are women, and six students are men. Twenty-four of the students fell in the “college age” range of 18-27 years old. Twenty-three participants were attending a postsecondary institution in California at the time of their participation in the study. Of these twenty-three participants, twenty were attending one large public university (“College A”), two were attending a second large public university (“College B”), and one was attending a medium-sized community college (“College C”). Of the remaining three participants, one was attending a medium-sized public university in Massachusetts (“College D”), another was attending a large private university in Utah (“College E”), and the third was attending a large public university in British Columbia (“College F”).

Table 1 summarizes these demographic data.

Table 1: Participant Demography

U.S. State or Canadian Province	College	Total Number of Students	Total Number of “College Age” Students	Total Number of Women	Total Number of Men
California		23	21	19	4
	Large public university (“College A”)	20	19	17	3
	Large public university (“College B”)	2	1	1	1

	B")				
	Medium-sized community college ("College C")	1	1	1	0
Massachusetts	Medium-sized public university ("College D")	1	1	1	0
Utah	Large private university ("College E")	1	1	0	1
British Columbia	Large public university ("College F")	1	1	0	1
TOTALS		26	24	20	6

I collected data from each participant in two steps. The first step was a brief written survey in which the participant provided basic demographic and education background information. (See Appendix A.) I primarily used this survey to ensure that all the participants, who were perceived to be eligible for this study when initially contacted, were indeed eligible to participate. The second step was a longer oral interview, in which they answered questions derived from the research questions listed above. Question topics included: language requirements in high school; language courses offered in high school; language study decisions in high school, and reasons behind those decisions; intent to study a language in college; language requirements in college; method of fulfillment of the college language requirement, and reasons behind using that method; and intent to study past the requirement, study completed beyond the requirement, and reasons behind those decisions. (See Appendix B.) For the purposes of this study, in the case of the participants who satisfied their college language

requirement by means other than college coursework, the language they studied to earn high school course credit, used to earn AP or IB exam credit, or used to take a college placement exam will be referred to as the language they studied in college. Where appropriate, I asked relevant follow-up questions, requested clarification, provided explanations for the participants, and encouraged them to elaborate. To facilitate analysis of the data, I made audio recordings of all of the oral interviews.

V. COLLEGE PROFILES

The participants featured in this study represent six different colleges. Of these six colleges, five are public, and one is private. Four are larger colleges, and two are medium-sized colleges. The six colleges represent three states in the United States and one province in Canada; three of the colleges are in California, one college is in Massachusetts, one college is in Utah, and one college is in British Columbia. At all of the colleges, students are required to study a language for a period ranging between 2-4 semesters or 3-6 quarters, or demonstrate prior completion of language studies deemed equivalent to the college's language requirement. At one of the colleges, which is a community college, students must satisfy the language requirement of the four-year college to which they intend to transfer. As this college is in California, most of its students enroll with the intent to transfer to a public four-year college in California; all public four-year colleges in California have language requirements ranging between 2-4 semesters or 3-6 quarters of language study. Also, this college offers only a handful of study abroad opportunities, and these opportunities do not accommodate students of every language the college offers. Conversely, the other five colleges offer study abroad opportunities for students of any language offered at the colleges, and additional study abroad opportunities for students of some languages that the colleges do not offer.

At three of the six colleges the data represent, students have the options of using Advanced Placement (AP) exam credit, Interbaccalaureate (IB) exam credit, credit from coursework completed at other colleges, or a departmental placement exam offered by the current college, to partially or completely satisfy their language requirement. Some language departments at these colleges require students to take a placement exam before beginning coursework, while other language departments allow students to “self-place” into the level of their choosing. However, students who can “self-place” cannot take classes out of sequence after successfully completing a class. Each of these three colleges offers enough coursework to satisfy the language requirement in at least thirty languages. These languages include languages widely spoken in countries in Latin America, the Far East, the Middle East, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Scandinavia, Western Europe, Central Europe, and Eastern Europe, as well as classic and ancient languages. Two of the three colleges offer north African and sub-Saharan African languages. One of the three colleges offers indigenous American languages as well as American Sign Language (ASL). Another of the three colleges offers indigenous Canadian languages.

At the other three colleges, students have the added option of applying high school course credit toward the satisfaction of their language requirement; at these colleges, having taken four years of coursework in one language in high school completely satisfies this requirement. At one of the colleges, students must take a placement exam in the language they wish to study before taking classes in that language, and cannot “self-place.” At another of the colleges, such placement exams are offered, but self-placement is allowed; and at the third college, placement exams are not offered, and self-placement is required. These colleges each offer fewer than twenty languages; however, all of the colleges offer languages that are widely spoken in

countries in Latin America, the Far East, and Western Europe. One of the colleges also offers Middle Eastern, Eastern European, and north African languages, as well as classical languages and ASL; and another of the colleges expands upon that selection to include Southeast Asian languages and indigenous American languages.

Table 2 features basic information about the six colleges featured in this study, as well as statistics regarding their language requirements and language offerings.

Table 2: Statistics of the Colleges Featured In the Current Study

Category	College A	College B	College C	College D	College E	College F
College Type	Large, public	Large, public	Medium-sized, community college	Medium-sized, public	Large, private	Large, public
State or Province	California	California	California	Massachusetts	Utah	British Columbia
Language Requirement	3 quarters (= 1 academic year)	3 semesters	Language requirement of intended transfer college	3 semesters	3-4 semesters (depends on language) (some majors only)	3-4 semesters
Alternate Fulfillment Options	AP credit, IB credit, college coursework, placement exam	AP credit, IB credit, college coursework, high school course credit, placement exam	AP credit, IB credit, high school course credit	AP credit, IB credit, college coursework, high school course credit, placement exam	AP credit, IB credit, college coursework, placement exam	AP credit, IB credit, college coursework, placement exam
Placement Exam	Required for some languages	Optional	N/A	Required	Required for some languages	Required for some languages
Self-Placement	Yes, for some languages	Yes	Yes	No	Yes, for some languages	Yes, for some languages

Number of Languages Offered	40 (Latin American, Far Eastern, Middle Eastern, South Asian, Southeast Asian, Scandinavian, Western European, Eastern European, Central European, north African, sub-Saharan African, classical, ancient, indigenous American, ASL)	17 (Latin American, Far Eastern, Middle Eastern, Southeast Asian, Western European, Eastern European, north African, classical, indigenous American, ASL)	10 (Latin American, Far Eastern, Middle Eastern, Western European, Eastern European, north African, classical, ASL)	5 (Latin American, Far Eastern, Western European)	30 (Latin American, Far Eastern, Middle Eastern, South Asian, Southeast Asian, Scandinavian, Western European, Eastern European, Central European, north African, sub-Saharan African, classical, ancient)	31 (Latin American, Far Eastern, Middle Eastern, South Asian, Southeast Asian, Scandinavian, Western European, Eastern European, Central European, classical, ancient, indigenous Canadian)
Study Abroad	Yes, for every language offered and more	Yes, for every language offered and more	Yes – limited selection for a few languages offered	Yes, for every language offered and more	Yes, for every language offered and more	Yes, for every language offered and more

VI. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

A. Second language learning choices

For this group of twenty-six participants, their language background prior to college had a heavy influence on their college language choices. In high school, twenty students studied Spanish, three studied French, one studied German, one studied Italian, one studied Latin, one

studied more than one language (Spanish and Latin – her studies are counted separately in the above totals), and one did not study a language. In college, nineteen students studied Spanish, two studied French, one studied German, three studied Mandarin Chinese, two studied Italian, one studied Japanese, one studied Vietnamese, one studied Portuguese, one studied Tagalog, and one studied Mixtec¹. Five students had studied more than one language in college by the time of their interview; their studies are counted individually in the totals above. Table 3 summarizes the participants’ high school and college language choices.

Table 3: High School and College Language Choices

Level of Education	Language	Number of Students	Number of Students Satisfying Language Requirement With Language
High School	Spanish	20	19
	French	3	3
	German	1	1
	Italian	1	1
	Latin	1	1
	More than one language (counted separately above)	1	N/A
	No language	1	N/A
College	Spanish	19	18
	French	2	2
	German	1	0
	Mandarin Chinese	3	2
	Italian	2	1
	Portuguese	1	0
	Japanese	1	1
	Vietnamese	1	1
	Tagalog	1	0
	Mixtec	1	1
	More than one language (counted separately above)	5	N/A

¹ For the purposes of this study, saying that a student “studied” a language in college means that a student either a) completed college coursework in that language, or b) used that language to fulfill the language requirement (possibly, without ever having completed college coursework in that language).

The data show that, when selecting a language to study in college, the participants had a clear preference for a language they had already studied in high school. Twenty-one of the twenty-six participants reported studying a language in college that they had studied in high school. On the topic of high school language studies, the high schools the participants attended had a limited selection of language class offerings to choose from; twenty-five students attended a high school that offered five or fewer languages, eight students attended a high school that offered only Spanish and French, and two students attended a high school that offered only Spanish or only French. Of the entire set of participants, only eleven students attended a high school that offered one or more less commonly taught languages (LCTLs). (The types of languages offered to each student in high school are featured in Table 4.) LCTLs did not attract very many of these students in high school, however; only two studied an LCTL (Italian or Latin) in high school, while nineteen studied Spanish, three studied French, and one studied German.

Table 4: High School Language Offerings

Languages Offered In High School	Number of Students Attending Such a High School
More than five languages (including one or more LCTLs)	1
Five or fewer languages (including one or more LCTLs)	10
Five or fewer languages (no LCTLs)	5
Only Spanish and French	8
Only Spanish	1
Only French	1

Given the participants' overall desire to continue with the languages they chose to study in high school, the relatively low numbers of high schools that offered an LCTL (let alone more than one), and the students' preference for commonly taught languages (CTLs) in high school, it is not surprising that twenty of the twenty-four students who studied a CTL in high school,

studied a CTL in college. Furthermore, these twenty students chose to study the same CTL that they had chosen in high school. (Table 5 focuses on the students who chose to study the same language in high school and in college.) Of those twenty students, eighteen chose Spanish, and two chose French. Only one student exclusively studied LCTLs in high school and in college. Participants often cited perceiving CTLs as being easier to learn than LCTLs (and cited Spanish as being easier to learn than other CTLs). For this reason, even though the colleges these students attended offered a significantly wider variety of languages – including several LCTLs – compared to their high schools, so many of the students chose to study a CTL. Due to the limited or non-existent LCTL offerings in these students’ high schools, as well as the students’ preference for what they thought would be the easiest language to learn, CTLs made up the majority or entirety of high school and college language studies for most of the students.

Table 5: High School Language Studies Continued In College

Language	Number of Students Studying In High School	Number of Students Continuing to Study In College
Spanish	19	18
French	3	2
German	1	0
Italian	1	1
Latin	1	0
TOTALS	25 (24 unique)	21

The languages that the students chose to study in college also appeared to be a reflection of the linguistic demography of the state or province in which they were studying, with twenty-three of the students choosing a language that had significant populations of speakers in the state or province where their college is located. Of these twenty-three students, thirteen of the students attending college in California, and the students attending college in Massachusetts and British Columbia, explicitly cited high populations of speakers of their chosen language in their state or province as a reason for choosing to study that language in college. One student who

grew up in southern California, very close to the Mexican border, chose to study Spanish in high school and in college for that reason: “I chose Spanish because I’m from [hometown] so it was, um, a matter of minutes to the border, and I thought it would be more practical for me to learn Spanish.” She planned to return to her hometown after graduating from her college, which was also located in California. Another student mentioned the demographics of his campus and the surrounding area as a reason for choosing to study Mandarin Chinese in college: “around [my college] there’s a HUGE [...] Chinese population, and on campus there’s a lot of native Mandarin speakers, like [...] next to English, that’s probably the most commonly used language on campus.” He liked the idea of being regularly exposed to authentic use of the target language (TL) without having to leave his college campus. Proximity and access to L1 speakers of the language had an influence on the students’ language learning choices in college.

Five of the participants studied two or more languages in college, by the time of their interview. However, for all five participants, the first language they studied in college – and the one they used to satisfy the language requirement – was either a) a language they had studied in high school, b) a CTL, c) a language that had significant populations of speakers in their area, or d) a language with some combination of these features. Although these five students took on multiple languages in college, they first satisfied the requirement with a language that featured at least one of the above-named learning advantages.

B. Second language learning motivation

While analyzing the data, it became difficult to label the participants’ language learning motivation as purely instrumental or purely integrative. One participant cited having absolutely no interest in language study (even throughout the course of satisfying his language requirement), and explicitly stated that he only took language classes because not doing so would

have precluded his earning a degree from his college. On the other hand, another participant was not even conscious of the language requirement during her college language studies, and was studying languages because the opportunity to do so formally presented itself (in high school and) in college. However, the remaining twenty-four participants fell somewhere in the middle of this spectrum, citing some combination of instrumental and integrative motivation for their college language studies. Furthermore, because all of the participants had to satisfy a language requirement in order to earn a degree from their college, and were even selected for this study based on that requirement, at least some part of their language learning motivation had to be instrumental. Based on this consideration and the data collected, I labeled the participants' motivation as either instrumental or integrative based on their primary reasons for studying a language(s). Participants who stated that they would not have studied a language without some form of instrumental motivation, even if they ended up completing language classes beyond what they were extrinsically compelled to take, are instrumentally motivated for the purposes of this study. Similarly, participants who pursued their language studies unaware of their college's language requirement, and participants whose motivation to study a language revolved around interest in languages and cultures, are integratively motivated for the purposes of this study. As it was so difficult to classify any of the participants as being purely instrumentally or integratively motivated, I placed students into one of these two categories based on their strongest sources of motivation for studying a language.

Of the twenty-six participants, seventeen had stronger instrumental than integrative motivation. Two of those students stated that knowledge of their chosen second language would benefit them due to the career field that they wanted to pursue. (Several other students cited usefulness as a reason for choosing the second language (L2) they chose, but did not specify how

or why studying that language would be useful.) One of these two students was a pre-med student, and was interested in studying another language in order to be able to communicate effectively with more patients: “I wanted to go into the field of medicine, which I’m trying to, and want to be able to speak to a lot of people who might come in who don’t speak English.” However, all seventeen students named their college’s language requirement as the primary reason for studying a language in college. Although integrative motivation was what led students to continue their college language studies after satisfying their language requirement, it is important to note that instrumental motivation was what led most of the participants to take language classes in college in the first place. All seventeen of the instrumentally motivated participants – over half of the total body of participants – prior to working on their language requirement, would not have planned to take language classes unless they had been required to do so. Furthermore, all sixteen of the students who did not continue beyond the language requirement were primarily instrumentally motivated in their language studies. One of these students simply described her language learning experience as “just another box to check” on her way to a college degree. The majority of the students had stronger instrumental than integrative motivation, and almost all of these strongly instrumentally motivated students, prior to beginning their college language studies, had no other reason to study a language other than to satisfy their college’s language requirement.

The other nine participants had stronger integrative than instrumental motivation. Some of these participants had declared or planned to declare either a major or minor in their chosen L2; however, they were still determined to have stronger integrative motivation because declaring a major or minor in a language is not a school-wide graduation requirement at any of the colleges these participants were attending. Each of these nine participants named several

sources of integrative motivation as having influenced their language studies. Simply having an interest in languages, and what and how people communicate using languages other than their (the participants') own L1, was the most frequently named of these sources (five students). However, living in a community where their chosen L2 is spoken widely, as well as having an interest in traveling to a country where the L2 is spoken widely, were also commonly named sources of integrative motivation (four students named each of these three sources). Slightly less common sources of integrative motivation were having family members and/or close friends who spoke the language, as well as having an interest in the culture of L1 speakers of the L2 (three students named each of these two sources). Although the majority of the students has stronger instrumental motivation, a significant number were strongly motivated by an interest in languages, the people who speak them, the countries where people speak them, and the cultures to which they are a gateway.

Table 6 lists the numbers of primarily instrumentally and integratively motivated students, as well as the sources of motivation that they named.

Table 6: Sources of Instrumental and Integrative Motivation

Source of Instrumental Motivation	Number of Students Naming Source	Source of Integrative Motivation	Number of Students Naming Source
[TOTAL instrumentally motivated participants]	17	[TOTAL integratively motivated participants]	9
Satisfying the language requirement (primary source)	17	Interest in languages	5
Enhancing career prospects	2	Living in a community speaking the L2 widely	4
		Desire to travel to countries speaking	4

		the L2 widely	
		Having family and/or close friends who speak the L2	3
		Interest in the culture of the population of L1 speakers of the L2	3

C. Second language learning persistence

Nearly all of the participants, at some point while satisfying their language requirement, planned to take or at least considered taking language coursework beyond the requirement. However, only a fraction of those with this theoretical interest in courses beyond the requirement successfully pursued further study in practice, as less than half of the twenty-three participants who expressed some interest in continuing actually continued with language coursework beyond the language requirement.

A total of ten students completed coursework beyond the language requirement. Of these ten students, five had taken at least one course in an L2 other than the one used to satisfy the requirement, by the time of their interviews. Also, at the time of their interviews, five of these ten students were enrolled in a language course(s). (Three of the students both had studied second L2 in college and were currently taking L2 coursework at the time of their interview.) However, the other five students experienced some sort of decline in motivation to learn a language at some point between satisfaction of their language requirement and being interviewed for this study; at the time of their interviews, they were not enrolled in any language classes. Although not all of the continuing students were taking a language class(es) at the time of the interview, these students reported taking coursework beyond their language requirement, in the same language used to satisfy the requirement and/or in another language.

The remaining sixteen students did not continue with coursework beyond the requirement. Thirteen of the sixteen students had, at some point during completion of their required coursework, considered coursework beyond the requirement, but ultimately did not complete any such coursework. Three of the students never even considered coursework beyond the requirement. The majority of the participants did not continue beyond their language requirement, due to either a personal lack of interest or an outside obstacle precluding their persistence beyond the requirement.

Table 7 lists the numbers of students continuing and not continuing beyond their language requirement, and the extent of their persistence in their college language studies at the time of their interview.

Table 7: Extent of Persistence in Second Language Studies in College

Level of Persistence Toward Further Coursework In College	Number of Students
TOTAL continuing students	10
Currently enrolled in a language course, studied multiple L2s	3
Currently enrolled in a language course (same L2 used to satisfy requirement)	2
Studied multiple L2s (not currently enrolled in an L2 course)	2
Studied one L2 beyond the requirement (same L2 used to satisfy requirement; not currently enrolled in an L2 course)	3
TOTAL non-continuing students	16
Considered taking more courses, never took more courses	13
Never considered taking more courses, never took more courses	3

Among the sixteen non-continuing students, many reasons were cited for their ultimately not having continued with their language studies. The most common reason, discussed by fourteen of the non-continuing participants, was a lack of space in their class schedules for more language courses. With the demands of their major and minor courses (none of these

participants chose majors or minors in a language other than English), they could not fit language classes into their schedule and/or would not have had the time to reasonably complete the coursework, without delaying their graduation date. Also, four students found the coursework too difficult to pursue beyond the required sequence. Some of these students had personally struggled with the required language coursework, while others had heard from friends and other peers that the next courses in the sequence would be too difficult for them. One student said of his experiences in his final required college Spanish course, “I felt like the jump to [the course] was a lot more intense [...] that was a very difficult class for me, and there was no way I could see myself going up to [the next levels of coursework].” Another student, while confident in her abilities in her chosen L2, had heard that the next courses beyond the required sequence were “unnecessarily hard” and that she “would rather take an easy, fun class as an elective.” On a related note, three students expressed concern that taking more courses in the sequence would lower their GPA because they would be more difficult; for some of these students, raising their GPA was necessary in order for them to graduate, and/or stay in their major. Three students had poor teachers for their required language courses, and did not enjoy the way those courses were designed, which greatly lessened their interest in pursuing further coursework. One of these three students described a teacher of one of her required language courses as “absolutely terrible” because “the information that [she] presented was usually false” and “that made it difficult because you were trying to not only learn on your own but correct others that [...] were supposed to be learning it with you.” Another of these three students did not like a teacher of one of his required language courses because he “felt she was very [...] pretentious” and “didn’t really take the time to make sure [the students] knew everything.” He added, “I think 8:00 AM [the class section’s meeting time] was just not good for her. I don’t think she was a happy person at 8:00

AM.” One of the sixteen non-continuing students did not have any interest in the languages offered at her college, and completing the required sequence in one of the languages her college offered did nothing to change her mind. Another student, on the other hand, enjoyed the required coursework in her chosen L2, but could not take additional coursework because her college only offered coursework up to the end of the required sequence for her chosen L2. A common conclusion heard among the non-continuing participants in their interviews was “I would take more classes, but not at [insert participant’s college here]” because of the above-named obstacles they faced. Table 8 provides a summary of the reasons that the non-continuing students cited for not continuing their language studies.

Table 8: Reasons for Lack of Persistence Among Non-Continuing Students

Reason for Lack of Persistence	Number of Students
No time and/or room in class schedule	14
Difficulty of more advanced courses in the sequence	4
Concern about effect on GPA	3
Bad experiences with design and/or teacher of required sequence courses	3
No interest in languages offered at the college	1
No coursework offered beyond the required sequence	1

VII. DISCUSSION

The purpose of the current study was to determine the language choices that native English speakers make as college students faced with a language requirement, their motivation toward their language studies, and the reasons behind their intent to continue or not continue their language studies in college following satisfaction of their language requirement.

A. Second language learning choices

With regard to language choices, most students chose for their college language studies the first language they studied in school. For those students, that language was the language they

studied starting in high school or even middle school, and in almost all cases, it was a commonly taught language (CTL). There was also a high preference for the language that the students perceived would lead them to satisfy the requirement most quickly and easily, whether they intended to satisfy that requirement through coursework at their college, or through an alternative method approved by their college. For most of the students, that language was the one they had studied in high school. Even the one student who never studied a language formally prior to entering college chose to study the language that others advised him would be the easiest for him to learn. Further, even the five students who studied more than one language in college satisfied the requirement with the “easiest” language and/or the language they had learned in middle school or high school, before studying other languages.

The data on language choices present problems for language course offerings at colleges. Many students, despite being required to study a language in order to graduate from high school, have only a limited selection of languages to choose from there. In contrast, five of the six colleges represented in this study offer courses in a large, highly diverse set of languages. However, these additional language course offerings did not matter very much, as the majority of this group of participants ended up studying in college the same language they studied in high school. If they are inclined to exclusively study, or at least start with, the language they studied in high school, then courses in languages not commonly taught in high schools will attract little to no interest on college campuses, which could in turn adversely affect the chances of those languages being offered in colleges in the future.

This data also problematize the offering of less commonly taught language (LCTL) course offerings in high schools. All of the students’ colleges offered at least one LCTL, but less than half of the students’ high schools offered any LCTLs. Even with eleven students attending

high schools offering at least one LCTL, only two of those students took advantage of the relatively rare opportunity that was afforded to them, and studied an LCTL in high school. Given the high preference for continuing with the language offered in high school, though, it appears that the key to increasing interest in LCTL courses in college is to have more student enrollment in LCTL courses in high school. In addition to more LCTLs in high school increasing the LCTL enrollment in college, increased student interest in LCTL courses could preclude elimination of LCTL course offerings or reduction of investment in LCTL resources by language program directors and other administrators.

The number of options that colleges offer for waiving language requirements, either partially or completely, is another issue raised by the data. Many of the students chose to use high school course credit, Advanced Placement (AP) or Interbaccalaureate (IB) exam credit, or placement exam credit (depending on what was applicable for them) to completely satisfy their language requirement. However, not all of these students continued studying their chosen second language (L2) after satisfying their language requirement, meaning that they did not take a single language course in college. Even though satisfactory scores on the above-named exams indicate some proficiency in a language other than English, they also mean that the college that a student attends may not be responsible for providing said proficiency if it offers the option of using exam credit to satisfy its language requirement. It is also possible for a student whose first language was English, but who grew up bilingual, to take an AP exam or a college placement exam, and satisfy a language requirement without having done any high school or college coursework in that language.² Even though many colleges offer a selection of courses in at least

² Although no participants from this study reported satisfying their language requirement in this way, other students who were ineligible to participate reported using a language they never studied in school to satisfy their language requirement.

a few languages, it appears that having students graduate with some competency in an L2 is more important than actually providing students with that L2 competency.

B. Second language learning motivation

The language requirement, by definition, precluded any of the participants' being purely integratively motivated to study a language in college, and, even putting that factor aside, only two students cited purely integrative or purely instrumental reasons for their language studies. However, the participants' motivation could be classified as "mostly integrative" or "mostly instrumental." All of the students who had stronger integrative than instrumental motivation completed language coursework beyond their school's requirement, with only one other person completing coursework beyond her requirement. However, the majority of the students had stronger *instrumental* than integrative motivation. Further, all of the more instrumentally motivated students conceded that they would not have taken language classes, were it not for the requirement. Language requirements are what brought most students to foreign language classrooms in the first place; had such requirements not existed, these students' primary source of motivation for foreign language learning would have been lost.

While it would be ideal for all of the students to be taking language classes simply because they love languages, and have a natural interest in communicating with others and exploring cultures other than their own, the reality is that most of the students needed language study to be required of them in order to actually take a language class. Furthermore, the students who had stronger instrumental than integrative motivation did not report developing strong integrative motivation for language studies after beginning work toward satisfaction of their language requirement. However, the development of stronger integrative motivation within

these students would significantly increase enrollment in language courses; as the current study has shown, integratively motivated students tend to take more language courses.

Given the data, which show stronger instrumental motivation in some students and stronger integrative motivation in others, it is important to consider the dynamics of a language classroom that has such a mix of students. While both groups of students are interested in learning the target language (TL), they have very different – arguably, contrasting – purposes for doing so. Having such a variety of sources of motivation represented in one classroom could be the root of challenges at best, and frustration at worst, for the instrumentally motivated students, the integratively motivated students, and the instructor. None of the colleges featured in this study have separate “tracks” for instrumentally and integratively motivated language learners. With two such tracks, students would benefit from having language classes that cater more to their needs and goals, and teachers would not have to worry about catering to such different sets of needs and goals in the same classroom. However, college administrations and language program directors, in incorporating separate tracks based on motivation, would have to concede that some of its students are not interested in learning a language simply because of an interest in learning languages. (Even though some students use exam credit, high school coursework, or coursework from other colleges so that they do not have to take language coursework at their current college, administrators and language program directors could always say that those options are in place so that students could continue their language studies at a level that is appropriate for them, or begin studying a new language.)

C. Second language learning persistence

Most students would ideally persist in their language studies beyond the required coursework. Many had even planned to sign up or in fact did sign up for additional coursework

at some point in their college career. However, practical issues caused the majority of the participants to end their language studies with the last required course in the sequence as determined by their college. Not having the time or space in their class schedule to pursue additional coursework while graduating on time with their desired major was the most common reason for not continuing. Other practical issues cited include concerns about GPA, the lack of additional coursework offered in their chosen L2, and difficulty (perceived or experienced) of additional courses in the sequence. However, some students also had problems with the curriculum or the teachers while taking the required courses. Also, others were simply uninterested in the languages offered at their college (although it should be noted that a mean of twenty-two languages were offered across the six colleges or universities attended by participants in this study, and every student had more languages offered to them by their college than by their high school).

Several issues preclude college students' having the time and schedule space for pursuing additional language studies. College students must consider other general education requirements, as well as their major and minor requirements, which often do not include language study beyond the college-wide requirement. Also, colleges often limit the number of credits that students can accrue prior to graduation, and/or limit the number of years for which credits can be applied toward graduation requirements, in order to encourage students to graduate in a timely manner. Even if there were no credit maximums or credit "expiration dates," many students would not be able to financially afford to extend their time in college in order to continue studying a language there. Students would have to choose a major or minor in linguistics, a language other than English, or comparative literature in order to feasibly do extensive language studies in college; only one student from the current study who did not

declare a major or minor in any of these subject areas pursued any study beyond the language requirement (and she only took one additional course).

Just as appealing to students with stronger instrumental than integrative motivation would increase enrollment in language courses in general, it would also increase the rates and extent of students' persistence in language studies beyond their colleges' language requirements. All nine students in the current study who had stronger integrative than instrumental motivation continued beyond their language requirement. Non-continuing students cited several other reasons, including concerns about GPA, difficulty of courses beyond the required sequence, a lack of interest in the courses offered at their college, and dissatisfaction with the curricula and/or teachers they had while taking required language courses, as reasons for not continuing beyond their language requirement. These issues – unlike administrative and financial obstacles, which even the most strongly integratively motivated of students may encounter when taking language courses as college students – tend to be of a greater magnitude for more strongly instrumentally motivated students. The students who continued beyond their language requirement, but had stopped studying by the time of their interview, only cited a lack of time and/or class schedule space as a reason for not continuing even further beyond their requirement.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

The findings discussed above yield five recommendations for language requirement, course, and program policies in high schools and colleges. In order to generate more interest in the full selection of languages offered in colleges, languages commonly not offered before college need to be offered in high school, or even middle school. In addition, college students need to be made more aware of the selection of languages their college offers. College language placement exams should be made mandatory, in order for students to enjoy a language learning

experience that is challenging, but not frustrating, and for teachers to be able to meet the needs of all their students. Language requirements should be reduced, so that students who do not plan to continue beyond the requirement do not have to take a series of language classes that will still not ultimately make them proficient in their chosen language. Finally, language teachers and language program directors should take more responsibility for the motivation of the students who take their classes. Below, I discuss each of these five recommendations in greater detail.

A. More languages should be offered in middle schools and in high schools.

Nearly all of the participants chose to study in college the same language that they studied in high school. However, the selection of languages offered at their high schools was not very extensive, with eight students attending high schools that only offered Spanish and French, and only one student attending a high school that offered more than five languages.

Furthermore, some of the participants said they had to take one or more language classes in middle school, which influenced their language choice in high school, and again in college. If a greater selection of languages were offered to students as early as possible in their schooling, they would choose to study languages other than Spanish or French (which twenty-two of the twenty-six students selected in high school), and persist in studying those languages throughout the remainder of the schooling they pursue.

In the current study, only two of the eleven students who attended high schools that offered courses in less commonly taught languages (LCTLs) ended up studying one of them. However, a follow-up study involving only college students who had the option of studying an LCTL at their high school would provide further information on why LCTL courses are appealing to some high school and college students, but not to others. Another possible option is a study of college students who had more LCTL than CTL courses offered to them in high

school, to determine if the number and/or variety of LCTL courses is important in generating student interest in LCTL courses. A study focusing on college students who studied a LCTL in high school, and their persistence with their chosen language through and beyond their college language requirement, would reveal more reasons why students would study an LCTL, and how the appeal of LCTLs could be increased in high school and in college. A study of college students who attended a high school offering only LCTL courses (if any such high schools exist) would reveal if being forced to study an LCTL in high school leads students to choose the same LCTL, a different LCTL, or a CTL in college.

B. A greater effort should be made to increase awareness about the languages offered in colleges.

While the participants in this study were aware of the full extent of their high school's language course offerings, the same could not be said of their awareness of their college's language course offerings. Although the names of the participants' high schools were not solicited for the purpose of checking the schools' actual language course offerings against what the students said their schools offered, all of the participants were confident in their knowledge of the languages offered by their high school. However, when I asked them to name the languages that their college offers, not a single student could name all or even half of them. The numbers of languages offered in high school and college could be responsible for this lack of knowledge, as all of the participants had more languages offered to them in college than in high school, and five of the six schools featured in this study, including all of the four-year colleges, offered at least 10 languages that students could use to satisfy their language requirement. Most of the students were aware that their college offers courses in numerous languages, but if they do not know what those languages are, they will not be able to find or study them. Colleges should

do more to market the language offerings to their students from the beginning of their time at that college.

A study that profiles colleges that already heavily promote their language courses and curricula, and the students who attend those colleges, would be helpful in determining what needs to be done in order to effectively encourage students to study languages other than Spanish or French, another language that was offered to them in high school, or a(nother) language they studied previously. If any such colleges exist, it would also be useful to conduct a study of colleges that force students to study a language other than what they studied or what was offered to them in high school. The language choices, motivation, and persistence of students at those schools would help determine the lengths to which college administrators need to go in order to make students aware of their language study options.

C. College language placement exams should be made mandatory.

Many of the different language departments at the six colleges featured in this study allow students to “self-place” in a language class of their choice, despite how little or how much experience and proficiency they have in that language. Several students responded to this allowance by self-placing into the lowest level of a language course in college, despite having taken three or four years of classes in that language in high school. Common reasons initially given for placing themselves so inaccurately included wanting to “refresh” and “go over the basics”, but upon further exploration of the topic in my interview with them, they admitted to wanting to increase (or, at least not decrease) their GPA and knowing that taking a language class that was below their experience and proficiency level would be an easy way to accomplish this goal. Unfortunately, these students complicate the dynamic of the lower-level classes in a

way that is less favorable to the novice or complete beginner students for whom those classes were designed.

On the other hand, two students reported being forced to start their college language courses at a level that ended up being too high for them to be able to successfully complete. One of these students, who studied Spanish in high school and wanted to continue studying Spanish beyond her college's language requirement, said "I wasn't allowed to take anything less than [the fourth course in the sequence], because of the credits I had gotten in high school." She did not complete any courses beyond the required sequence, because having taken four years of Spanish courses in high school, the regulations in place at her college precluded her starting at the level she felt was appropriate for her. "It [the fourth course in the sequence] was a crazy mess," she continued. "The teacher told me after the first day that he didn't think I was prepared enough to be in that class. I dropped it after the first class." As evidenced by this student's story, not even the advisement of a faculty member could overrule the language class placement policy set forth by this college's administration.

Requiring all language departments to administer placement exams to all students who wish to take courses in their department, and forcing them to start at the level deemed most appropriate for them based on their exam results, would minimize the numbers of students inaccurately self-placing into courses, and the adverse impact that such self-placement has on beginner-level language classes. Stricter use of placement exams would also accommodate students who truly need to be at a lower level than administrative regulations prescribe based on their previous history of exposure to the target language (TL).

A study exclusively of students taking classes in language departments with mandatory placement exams and mandatory enforcement of exam results would determine if any other

issues (not involving placement exams) prevent students from being appropriately challenged in their language courses. Conversely, a study of students taking classes in language departments where students self-place into the level of their choice, as well as of the teachers of these classes, would provide a sense of student and teacher attitudes toward having higher-proficiency students in beginning classes, and having lower-proficiency students in advanced classes.

D. Language requirements should be reduced.

Many colleges have general education requirements, including language requirements, in order for their graduates to have a well-rounded education, in addition to having more advanced training in their chosen major (and minor) field(s). However, some students from the current study, including students who satisfied the language requirement in ways other than taking classes at their university, complained that having only three or four classes in a language was not sufficient for developing enough proficiency to use the language outside of the classroom. Their complaints are validated by the results of scientific studies discussed by Schumann (2011): it takes 10,000 hours of practice, which equates to 20 hours per week for ten years, to master any skill, including learning a language. Developing even adequate proficiency in a skill is said to require 4,000 hours of practice (Schumann, 2011). When asked if they considered taking classes beyond the language requirement, however, the participants in this study cited a lack of time due to their needing to complete general education and major requirements. Reducing the language requirement to one course in one language would be a better alternative. By reducing the language requirement to one course, the students who cannot and/or will not continue beyond the language requirement (in particular, the students who could not completely satisfy their language requirement through exam credit or previous course credit) would have more time in their schedules to take courses in their major, courses in their minor, and/or other general education

courses, while still having the exposure to some language other than English that their college wants its students to have. The students who plan to study languages in college with little or no regard for the language requirement would benefit from a more favorable classroom environment; there would be higher percentages of integratively motivated students in the classes offered beyond the first, introductory course. (Of the ten people in this study who continued past the language requirement, nine were considered to have stronger integrative than instrumental motivation.) Having separate versions of the introductory course(s) for a language – one for people who plan to continue beyond the language requirement, and one for people who do not – may also benefit both groups of students.

Three studies could be done to further validate these recommendations. One of these possible studies is a study of a college where a one-course language requirement is already in place. Researchers could ask the students who took their required language course at their college, but did not continue beyond their requirement, about their feelings about the language requirement. The students who did continue beyond their requirement could be asked about their experiences in language classes with no students who were primarily motivated by the language requirement. Another of these possible studies is a study of a college that has separate sections of its required language courses for students who do not intend to continue beyond the language requirement. If a college who had not already implemented such a policy were willing, this policy could be implemented at that college for a year or for the purposes of the study. Researchers could ask the students about their experiences in language classes with only students who had similar sources of motivation to study languages. Teachers of these classes could be asked about the benefits and challenges of teaching separate sections of students based on sources of motivation, and any adjustments to curricula that they made to better accommodate

the different sections of students. The third of these possible studies could combine these two methodologies; it could feature a school that has both a one-course language requirement and separate sections of the first course in each language, designed based on the students' sources of motivation.

E. Language teachers and language program directors should assume more responsibility for increasing motivation in the language classroom and persistence in language study.

Ideally, every college student who takes language classes in college would be highly interested in studying languages, and highly motivated to successfully complete extensive language studies. However, as evidenced by the seventeen out of twenty-six students in this study who would not have taken a language course if it were not a graduation requirement, not every student who is in a language class has such motivation, and this lack of motivation will be an issue for as long as colleges have language requirements.

Language teachers have some responsibility for instilling motivation in students. Three students complained of their language teachers having negative or indifferent attitudes toward their students, citing these issues as reasons why they did not continue beyond the language requirement. If language teachers are not approachable and raise the affective filter in the classroom, even the most (instrumentally and/or integratively) motivated students are likely to experience some decline in motivation. Teacher training specifically geared toward working effectively with students would be necessary in order to minimize animosity between teachers and students. Also, a study of language teachers would be helpful in order to understand any negative attitudes they may have had toward teaching (certain (groups of) students).

Language program directors train and manage teachers, as well as develop class curricula; they also have some responsibility for the motivation and persistence of the students

that take classes in their departments. The three students who complained about their language teachers also said that at least one of their teachers was incompetent and inadequately prepared to teach the class. Several other students either thought based on firsthand experience or heard from other students that the classes in their chosen L2 were “unnecessarily hard”, especially at the levels beyond the required sequence. Although language program coordinators usually have both theoretical knowledge of how to develop class curricula and how to train teachers effectively, as well as having experience as language teachers, they should take the students’ needs and concerns – as heard from the students themselves – into consideration when making their training and development decisions. A study focusing on student attitudes toward their language teachers and the influence they believe their teachers have on the learning environment would provide a greater sense of the issues that may need to be addressed in teacher training modules. Also, a study of language teachers and their attitudes toward the curricula they use (but did not develop themselves) would elucidate flaws in the curricula in practice that may not have been foreseen or accounted for theoretically. Interviewing language program directors about the curricula and teacher training modules they designed and the reasons behind the design choices they made would allow for what teachers are actually doing in their classrooms to be checked against what they are being told to do by their supervisors. However, a study of teacher-student discourse in language classrooms, in addition to all three of the above-mentioned studies, would also be necessary, in order to corroborate the claims of the students, teachers, and language program directors, which could easily be exaggerated or completely false.

IX. CONCLUSIONS

The current study – one of the first about language learning choices, motivation, and persistence that has a specific focus on L1 English college students, and that does not focus on a

specific L2 being studied by these students – produced many results that can be compared with those produced by previous studies in the current body of scholarly work on this topic. The data show a strong correlation between students’ language learning choices in high school and their language learning choices in college. Further, since language offerings at these participants’ high schools were quite limited, there was a high preference for commonly taught languages (CTLs) – particularly, Spanish and French – in college. With regard to motivation, strong instrumental motivation was more common than strong integrative motivation, and it was instrumental motivation that made the majority of the participants study a language in college. The fact that there was a language requirement to fulfill in college was by far the most common source of instrumental motivation, and often the sole source of instrumental motivation. However, strong integrative motivation was a common characteristic among the students who continued their language studies beyond their college’s requirement – although there were more students who did not continue than there were students who did continue. Not being able to take language classes beyond the requirement and graduate in a timely manner was by far the most common reason why the non-continuing students did not continue, but other issues concerning the difficulty of the coursework, dissatisfying experiences when completing required course sequences, and lack of interest in the languages their college offered all played a role in some students’ decisions not to continue beyond their language requirement. Based on the results of this study, I make a number of recommendations regarding language course offerings, language course awareness, language requirements, language program curricula, and language teachers’ and program directors’ roles in fostering student motivation.

The fact that there was a small number of participants in this study, however, means that several variables can be adjusted in future versions of this study to yield more generalizable

results that further validate my recommendations. Also, based on feedback received from participants in this study, the design of the study itself could use some slight alterations in order to make future data sets that are collected more significant.

Based on the results of this study, I consider a total of seven amendments that could be made to the methodology of this study if it were to be repeated in the future. Increasing the number of participants would make the data set larger and more generalizable. Interviewing an equal or near-equal number of male and female participants would allow for a more informed response to the existing literature on gender and language learning motivation (Sung & Padilla, 1998; Shaaban & Ghaith, 2000; Kobayashi, 2002; Williams et al., 2002; Mori & Gobel, 2006). As colleges attract adults of all ages, diversifying the age brackets in which participants could be placed would allow for commentary on age and language learning. More geographic diversity with regard to the colleges the participants attend would help determine if the ideal L2 for L1 English speakers to study is a function of the region of the world where the learner lives or studies. Focusing on students from a particular ethnic group(s) would provide a response to the literature claiming that learner ethnicity plays a role in L2 studies (Moore, 2005). Modifying the oral interview questions so as not to include the words “requirement” or even “language” until after the participant himself/herself mentioned those words would provide more insight as to how memorable and/or important language study was to the participants in college. Finally, collecting information on the participants’ college majors would determine if there is a link between students’ fields of study and/or major requirements and their college language learning. To conclude, I elaborate upon my discussion of these seven potential amendments.

A. Increasing the number of participants

Simply increasing the number of participants, even if nothing else were changed, would allow for a greater and more diverse set of language learning stories. While the minor details surrounding each of the participants' stories were different, many of the stories were, at their core, very similar (with only a few exceptions). There was so much agreement among the students with regard to languages studied in high school and college, instrumental motivation, and theoretical desire to pursue coursework beyond the language requirement; however, it is difficult to determine if this agreement is at all representative of the population of L1 English speakers studying L2s in college, because only twenty-six participants were interviewed. Even though small-scale studies that provide in-depth information about each participant certainly have merit, an increase in the number of participants (rather than more in-depth studies of the same number or a similarly small number of participants) would be better for this specific topic.

B. Equalizing the male/female participant ratio

Out of the twenty-six participants in this study, only six – less than twenty-five percent – were men. While their stories did differ greatly, the interviews with the participants were not so in-depth enough that even just six male participants could yield any significant result. One idea that was considered in the process of analyzing the data was “matching” each of the six male participants' data with the female participant that had the most similar data, and making comparisons between the males and females in each pair. However, none of the male participants had data or profiles that were very similar to those of any of the female participants', so that part of the analysis would not have revealed very much. Altering the initial participant selection criteria with this goal (making comparisons between male and female participants) in mind is a possibility for a future version of this study.

With a female to male ratio of over 3:1, future studies similar to the current one should also have equal or near equal numbers of participants of both genders. A more equal ratio was the initial goal for this study, but there was little male interest in the study despite the number of men whose participation was requested. With so much of the literature (Sung & Padilla, 1998; Shaaban & Ghaith, 2000; Kobayashi, 2002; Williams et al., 2002; Mori & Gobel, 2006) revolving around differences between males' and females' language learning attitudes and motivation, it would have been ideal to be able to respond to the findings of that previous literature. However, it must be noted that, with so few of the men who were contacted expressing interest in being interviewed, the numbers of male and female participants in this study may, in and of themselves, be commentary on male motivation toward language learning.

C. Finding participants from as many age brackets as possible

With twenty-four of the twenty-six participants being considered “college age” students, it would be important to have as many age brackets as possible represented in future versions of this study. One of the main factors that differentiate postsecondary education from primary and secondary education is that postsecondary education attracts adults from many different age groups. Previous literature (Sung & Padilla, 1998; Williams et al., 2002; Kormos & Cszier, 2008) indicates that students in different age groups have different attitudes toward L2 studies. One of the two students in this study who was not in the “college age” age bracket noted being interested in studying a language, but also being worried about the idea of his college degree depending on satisfying a language requirement. The other student in this group, however, was very conscious of and excited about the many languages that would be offered to her in college, and was not aware of the existence or nature of her language requirement during her college language studies. Within the small sample of young adults, there are even more dramatic

differences among language learning attitudes. However, in order to be able to draw a reasonable conclusion about the influence of age on language learning motivation, interviewing more people from as many age brackets as possible would be necessary.

D. Seeking more geographic diversity among students

Almost all of the participants – twenty-three in total – were attending college in just one of the United States. California, especially in its larger cities, features great ethnic and linguistic diversity, and not all of the participants attending school in California were also born and raised there. However, a group consisting nearly entirely of students attending college in California cannot represent the entire set of college students in the United States. The demographics of each region of the U.S. vary greatly, which undoubtedly has some influence on the L2s that students would choose to study, as well as whether they believe studying an L2 (relative to other subjects) would carry much of a benefit for them. In this study, twenty of the participants used Spanish to satisfy their language requirement, and all of them were attending college in California, an area with high populations of Spanish speakers. With only three of the fifty states – and only three different regions of the country – being accounted for in this study, making a greater effort to have as many states and regions as possible represented would be important for future studies.

The same can be said for geographic diversity on a global scale; only two countries were represented in this study, and Canada, one of those countries, was represented by only one participant. One of the goals of this study was to interview eligible participants from many countries. There are native English speakers in many countries who are required to study an L2 in college, and the part of the world where they attend college is likely to have some effect on

their views of language learning in college. Interviewing more participants from other Anglophone countries would have undoubtedly contributed to the results of this study.

E. Determining the role of ethnicity in L2 learning attitudes

Moore's (2005) study of college language learning was unique in that it focused on African-American students, and produced results that had some implications for the perceptions of African-American college students toward learning an L2 in college, as well as for the selection of L2s offered to African-American college students, especially those who attend colleges or have chosen majors that do not impose a language requirement. Although students of a wide variety of ethnicities participated in the current study, ethnic diversity among the participants was not purposefully sought out, and the ethnic backgrounds of the participants were not considered in the analysis of their data. In future versions of this study, either focusing on one ethnicity or making comparisons between ethnicities a goal would allow for some sort of response to Moore's results.

F. Changing some of the oral interview questions

Some of the participants casually provided feedback about the design of the questions asked of them. (See Appendix B for the questions.) Nearly every question made reference to the participant's particular language requirement, or the more general idea of required language studies in college. Wording the questions in this way may have primed some students to carefully consider the language requirement when forming their answers, whereas wording the questions to focus on the broader topic of their college language studies (and seeing if they naturally mention the requirement) may have been more appropriate for this study. Also, the few students who took language classes with little or no awareness of the language requirement were uncertain of how to best answer some of the questions, and even questioned their eligibility to

participate in this study throughout their interviews. On the other hand, many of the students interviewed began discussing language requirements before being asked a question related specifically to their requirement. It appears that those students for whom their language requirement was important or salient would mention it without being prompted.

Even including “language classes” in the wording of the questions may have caused too many “leading questions” in the oral interview. Follow-up questions pertaining to college language classes could have been used, if needed, but not including “language” in the wording of the initial list of questions (or, at least not including “language” in the wording of the first few questions on that list) would have allowed for a sense of whether studying a language in college in general was a memorable part of their college experience (in a positive or negative way). (If language classes were never mentioned, then perhaps their language classes were easily forgettable experiences.) A future version of this study could start instead with the question “What classes did you take in college?” or “Tell me about the classes you took in college.”

G. Collecting information on students’ majors in college

In their interviews, twenty of the twenty-six participants mentioned their major or intended major in college. All of the participants who disclosed choosing majors in science, mathematics, and medicine chose to satisfy their language requirement using the fastest and easiest method they could. For nearly all of these participants, this method was applying Advanced Placement (AP) exam or Interbaccalaureate (IB) exam credit, high school credit, or results from a placement exam, and not taking any coursework at their college. Also, these students cited a lack of time and class schedule space, as well as concerns about their GPA, as their main reasons for not taking any classes outside of their general education and major requirements, despite any interest they may have had in studying a language. For a future study,

it would be interesting to have equal or near-equal numbers of students in the humanities and social sciences versus students in mathematics and life/physical sciences, in order to make comparisons between these groups of students, and possibly confirm an inclination that math and science majors have to avoid language study in college.

While the findings from the current study address the research questions to some extent, incorporating the above-named amendments in future versions of the study would yield more significant answers. In particular, generalizability of the findings would increase with modifications to the methodology of the study. Increased generalizability would, in turn, result in a greater contribution to the literature on the different factors found to affect language learning choices, motivation, and persistence. Despite the many ways in which it could be adjusted in the future, however, the methodology behind the current study has, together with the findings of the study, broken new ground with regard to knowledge about the L2 learning experiences of L1 English speaking college students in the face of college language requirements.

APPENDIX A

Preliminary written survey questions

1. What college/university do you attend currently? Are you an undergraduate student?
What is your year in school? When are you expecting to graduate?
2. What is your first language(s)? What is your parents' first language(s)?
3. Does your college or university have a foreign language requirement? If so, what is it?
Have you completed this requirement? If so, when did you complete this requirement?
4. Are you interested in participating in an oral interview about your language study?
5. Do you understand and accept the details of my study and your participation in it?³

³ The original written survey included a comprehensive statement of the details of the current study, following question 5.

APPENDIX B

Oral interview questions

1. Did your high school have a foreign language study requirement? If so, what was it?
2. What languages were offered at your high school? [Which one(s) did you use to fulfill the requirement? Which other ones did you study? Why did you study that/those languages?]⁴
3. Think back to when you first found out that your college [and high school, if applicable] had a language requirement. As far as you can remember, how did you feel about having this/these requirement(s)? At that/those time(s), would you have taken any foreign language classes if they were not required?
4. To the best of your knowledge, what languages are offered at your college? Which one(s) did you use to fulfill the requirement? Why did you choose to use this language(s)?
5. Did your college offer an option to take a placement exam in a language (other than English) that you are already proficient in, in order to finish the requirement faster? [Did you take the exam? If so, how did you do? Did you use your results to (partially) fulfill the requirement? If not, why not?]
6. Think back to when you were completing the language requirement. Did you enjoy the process of fulfilling it? Did you always/never plan to study past the requirement, or did you feel differently at different points? Why (what experiences, if any) made you feel the way you did?

⁴ Brackets ([]) indicate additional questions that I may or may not have asked, depending on the participant's answers to previous questions.

7. A. What other foreign language study have you done/are you currently doing at your college, in addition to the language study you did/used to fulfill the requirement? [Why did you choose those languages/courses?]
- B. Have you registered/are you registering for any language courses at your college for the coming quarter? If yes, which ones and why? If not, why not?⁵

⁵ Some of the data collection occurred during students' Spring Break, before which students from College A (see Tables 1 and 2), who were on an academic quarter system (rather than an academic semester system), may have registered for their first class beyond their requirement for the coming quarter. As such, those particular students were asked Question 7B in addition to Question 7A; all other students were asked Question 7A only.

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