

# **EXPERIENCES WITH STUDY ABROAD IN ISRAEL: HERITAGE STATUS AND HEBREW**

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Few studies within second language acquisition research have investigated the study abroad (SA) experience of L2 students traveling to Israel, where most SA students are Jewish, or heritage language learners (HLLs) of Hebrew. Consequently, even less is known about the experiences of non-heritage language learners (non-HLLs) in Israel. This mixed-methods study, which includes 8 HLLs and 7 non-HLLs who studied Modern Hebrew in Israel, explored the following questions: In what ways do heritage and non-heritage status impact learners' linguistic and cultural development during SA? What role do anxiety, motivation, and the length of SA have in this development? Do students feel that the pre-SA classroom experience was adequate preparation for SA? Three data sources were collected to address these questions: (1) A three-part survey adapted from past surveys regarding SA and heritage, L2 anxiety, and L2 motivation; (2) Follow-up interviews to elucidate survey responses; and (3) Blog posts and mass emails about SA. These three sources illustrate that heritage status was fundamental in shaping the SA experience and determining differing anxieties and motivations. The data also revealed a significant interaction between heritage status, SA length, and proficiency improvement. These findings present several implications to both SLA research and Hebrew teaching.

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Within second language acquisition (SLA) research, a growing body of literature has been devoted to study abroad (SA). This research has largely sought to measure the impact of SA on linguistic and cultural competence, and uncover the ingredients to a successful SA experience. There have been many approaches to this, which often take the form of investigating a few factors and individuals from among several within an SA program. While work in the area of SA is undoubtedly progressing, there are many additional questions and unique contexts to address.

There are a number of groups investigated in SA research, including program directors, teachers, students, host families, and host communities; here host families refer to those families in the target country who "host"

students or allow them to live with them during SA, and host communities refer to communities of natives in the SA country. By far the most researched SA groups are students, because they shape and interpret the SA experience, and they are the ones who need to invest the time and effort to learn the second language (L2).

Another key distinction drawn by researchers is the SA living situation, which may be in dormitories, in off-campus lodging, or with host families. This living situation is often determined by the SA program, and can be informative about opportunities for language and cultural exposure.<sup>1</sup> Finally, there are three main SA settings which SA research examines: Educational institutions and classrooms, places of residence, and service or other informal encounters. This last setting refers to those exchanges which take place with native L2 speakers in a natural environment.

The majority of SA-related research has focused on popular SA locales, such as France, Germany, and Spain. In contrast, very little research has examined SA in Israel, which is the 16th most-visited SA destination according to the 2010/11 Open Doors report.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, most past studies that have investigated SA in Israel represent the point of view of Israeli scholars aiming to improve their programs. These studies largely focus on Jews, who visit Israel for a variety of reasons - such as to see the land, to explore their heritage, or to improve their Hebrew. A strong motivator for these studies is that the government of Israel has an overarching goal to bring in more Jewish *olim* for nation-building purposes.

This study seeks to investigate this issue from a different perspective; namely, to better understand university-level students of Modern Hebrew in the United States, and provide a clearer picture of their identities, motivations, and learning experiences leading up to and during SA. Although many Hebrew students are linked by common backgrounds, they represent a wide variety of learners. For example, a large body of Hebrew students are Jewish heritage language learners (HLLs) who claim ancestral or familial ties to Hebrew. These students claim varying amounts of religiosity, Jewish cultural ties, and connections to Israel. In addition, a number of Hebrew learners are non-heritage language learners (non-HLLs), and as such often possess a unique set of reasons for studying Hebrew. Although students only represent one perspective on the SA experience, they

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<sup>1</sup> Celeste Kinginger, *Language Learning and Study Abroad: A Critical Reading of the Research* (New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> Institute of International Education, "Top 25 Destinations of U.S. Study Abroad Students, 2009/10–2010/11," *Open Doors Report on International Educational Exchange*. Accessed July 29, 2013. <http://www.iie.org/opendoors>

have a vital role in SA and can provide valuable insights toward an understanding of this area.

Two useful constructs to understand L2 learners more deeply are motivation and anxiety. This study examines five types of motivation: intrinsic, instrumental, integrative, assimilative, and heritage-related.

1. *Intrinsic motivation* has been described as the act of doing something for its own sake, because the activity is pleasurable, interesting, or cultivating;<sup>3</sup>
2. *Instrumental motivation* deals with those motivated to study their target language for pragmatic, real-world reasons, such as to pursue an occupation;
3. *Integrative motivation* relates to how much learners desire to integrate with the people and culture of their target language;<sup>4</sup>
4. *Assimilative motivation* has been defined as the desire to assimilate into a target language's culture and become a part of it, and can be perceived as a stronger form of integrative motivation;<sup>5</sup> and
5. *Heritage-Related Motivation* refers to those learners who wish to connect to their heritage better through the L2 and second culture (C2). While there is some overlap in these types of motivation, this breakdown is particularly enlightening for drawing implications for teaching.

Anxiety can have a crippling effect on learners, and prevent them from developing into capable L2 speakers; anxiety is "quite possibly the affective factor that most pervasively obstructs the learning process".<sup>6</sup> Some scholars have argued for a type of anxiety specific to learning foreign languages, or Foreign Language Anxiety (FLA), which has been attributed to a difference between our view of ourselves and others' view of us.<sup>7</sup> This, along with motivation, has had a considerable impact on the quality and outcomes of SA, and will be discussed in more depth later in the paper.

With these emphases in mind, this paper will first review relevant literature in the areas of general SA research, Israel-specific SA research,

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<sup>3</sup> Edward L. Deci and Richard M. Ryan, *Intrinsic Motivation and Self-Determination in Human Behavior* (New York: Plenum, 1985).

<sup>4</sup> Robert C. Gardner, *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation* (London: Edward Arnold, 1985).

<sup>5</sup> C. Ray Graham, "Beyond Integrative Motivation: The Development and Influence of Assimilative Motivation," in *On TESOL '84, A Brave New World for TESOL*, ed. Penny Larson, Elliot Judd, and Dorothy S. Messerschmitt (Washington, DC: TESOL, 1984).

<sup>6</sup> Jane Arnold and H. Douglas Brown, "A Map of the Terrain," in *Affect in Language Learning*, ed. Jane Arnold (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 8.

<sup>7</sup> Elaine K. Horwitz, "It ain't Over 'til it's Over: On Foreign Language Anxiety, First Language Deficits, and the Confounding of Variables," *The Modern Language Journal* 84, no. 2 (2000).

heritage learners, motivation, and anxiety. Following that, the present research will be described and the collected data analyzed and discussed. Finally, the paper will close with a discussion of implications, limitations, and future directions for research in this area. Findings from this study enhance our understanding of both SA and SLA research, and augment our understanding of the diverse contexts and many types of learners involved in SA. Furthermore, these students' insights and experiences provide clues and insights to instructors of Modern Hebrew regarding the preparation of their students for future SA to Israel.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Study Abroad: Brief Overview of the Research

The largest body of research within SA and SLA has examined the link between SA and language proficiency, and both early and later studies in the area have found a strong association between these two factors.<sup>8</sup> More specifically, several studies have found significant improvement in speaking and fluency; additional gains have been found in listening comprehension.<sup>9</sup> Some studies have also reported considerable advances in reading and writing, although these skills are less represented in SA research.<sup>10</sup> In spite of these positive indicators, there are a number of questions as to whether the instruments used in these studies are relevant to the SA context and properly indicate gains.<sup>11</sup> For example, the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), which has been utilized in several studies, only captures learner responses to specific academic questions in a formal setting. Thus the OPI would likely not capture much of the rich language acquired during SA, including informal speech and pragmatics.

Recent studies have adopted a more-detailed approach toward understanding L2 learners, in order to address a further complexity in this

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<sup>8</sup> John B. Carroll, "Foreign Language Proficiency Levels Attained by Language Majors near Graduation from College," *Foreign Language Annals* 1 (1967); Dan E. Davidson, "Study Abroad: When, How Long, and With What Results? New Data From the Russian Front," *Foreign Language Annals* 43, no. 1 (2010).

<sup>9</sup> See for example María Juan-Garau and Carmen Pérez-Vidal, "The Effect of Context and Contact on Oral Performance in Students who Go on a Stay Abroad," *VIAL, Vigo International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 4 (2007); Celeste Kinginger, "Language Learning in Study Abroad: Case Studies of Americans in France," *The Modern Language Journal* 92, no. s1 (2008).

<sup>10</sup> See for example Richard Brecht, Dan Davidson, and Ralph Ginsburg, "Predictors of Foreign Language Gain During Study Abroad," in *Second Language Acquisition in a Study Abroad Context*, ed. Barbara F. Freed (Philadelphia: Benjamins, 1995); Miyuki Sasaki, "Effects of Study-Abroad Experiences on EFL Writers: A Multiple-Data Analysis," *The Modern Language Journal* 91, no. 4 (2007).

<sup>11</sup> Kinginger, *Language and Study Abroad*.

area – namely the significant amount of individual learner variation within these results, i.e., some learners make substantial progress in their linguistic and intercultural competence while abroad, while others make little to none or even backslide. SA studies have suggested several reasons for this variation. It is noteworthy to mention three that have a sizeable impact:

First, learners play a considerable role in whether SA has a positive or negative impact on their linguistic and cultural knowledge. Learning an L2 requires a willful investment of time and effort, and the SA experience does not guarantee attainment.<sup>12</sup> Moreover, several researchers have observed that during SA learners exhibit varying levels of available time, openness toward the host culture, attachments to home, and willingness to take risks in the L2.<sup>13</sup> Learners also arrive in the host culture with their own identity, or L2 self-construction.<sup>14</sup> The degree to which language learners shift their identities toward the host culture can determine both their level of access to ideal networks and communities of practice (CoPs),<sup>15</sup> and their ultimate level of attainment in the L2.<sup>16</sup>

Second, SA programs shape the SA experience by their policies and procedures. This influence is manifested in several ways: By determining how much free time students have outside of the classroom, how long the SA term will be,<sup>17</sup> how much emphasis is placed on the solidarity of the SA cohort group,<sup>18</sup> and often what students' living situation will be.<sup>19</sup>

Third, host communities are a crucial component of the quality of the SA experience, since these communities may be open or indifferent towards learners; they may also give learners legitimacy as capable speakers, or label them as deficient and use simplified registers with them.<sup>20</sup> In other cases

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.; Susan M. Knight and Barbara C. Schmidt-Rinehart, "Enhancing the Homestay: Study Abroad from the Host Family's Perspective," *Foreign Language Annals* 35, no. 2 (2002); Deborah Melanie Levin, "Language Learners' Sociocultural Interaction in a Study Abroad Context" (Doctoral dissertation, Indiana University, 2001).

<sup>14</sup> Valerie A. Pellegrino, *Study Abroad and Second Language Use: Constructing the Self* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

<sup>15</sup> Kathleen Farrell Whitworth, "Access to Language Learning during Study Abroad: The Roles of Identity and Subject Positioning" (Doctoral dissertation, Pennsylvania State University, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> Allison J. Spenader, "Acquiring Oral Language Skills over the Course of a High School Year Abroad: What's in it for Absolute Beginners?" in *The Longitudinal Study of Advanced L2 Capacities*, ed. Lourdes Ortega and Heidi Byrnes (New York: Routledge, 2008).

<sup>17</sup> Kinginger, *Language and Study Abroad*.

<sup>18</sup> Sally Sieloff Magnan and Michele Back, "Social Interaction and Linguistic Gain during Study Abroad," *Foreign Language Annals* 40, no. 1 (2007).

<sup>19</sup> Kinginger, *Language and Study Abroad*.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

they may just desire to speak English rather than the L2.<sup>21</sup> Finally, host communities may hold stereotypes or views toward gender or race.<sup>22</sup>

Several implications have been drawn from this research for both SA participants and the programs in which they enroll. For example, researchers have suggested that students should be "dispassionate observers" in the host culture instead of "judgmental consumers".<sup>23</sup> They should also immerse themselves and find native speakers who will promote their learning.<sup>24</sup> If possible, they should choose an ideal living situation for themselves, which is arguably the homestay.<sup>25</sup> They should also avoid spending too much time with L1 cohorts. Learners ought to find ways to make connections with natives before going on SA,<sup>26</sup> which can be accomplished through internet-mediated communication with them.<sup>27</sup> Finally, they should seek out organizations or clubs that match their interests.<sup>28</sup>

It has been suggested that SA programs need to focus more on promoting knowledge of the target culture and less on group solidarity, so students are better prepared to understand cultural differences.<sup>29</sup> These programs can also establish orientation sessions before SA that illustrate effective engagement with the host community, do not overly constrict native faculty and host families, and only place one student per host family.<sup>30</sup> Finally, SA programs and teachers can intervene for maximal learner benefit during SA, such as through the implementation of reflective blogging.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Kinginger, "Americans in France"; Linda Librande, "Journal Reflections: Learning Korean at Home and Abroad," *Carleton Papers in Applied Language Studies* 15 (1998).

<sup>22</sup> Kinginger, *Language and Study Abroad*.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 129.

<sup>24</sup> Dan E. Davidson, "Study Abroad and Outcomes Measurements: The Case of Russian," *The Modern Language Journal* 91, no. 2 (2007); Chilin Wang, "Toward a Second Language Socialization Perspective: Issues in Study Abroad Research," *Foreign Language Annals* 43, no. 1 (2010).

<sup>25</sup> Knight and Schmidt-Rinehart, "Enhancing the Homestay"; Barbara C. Schmidt-Rinehart and Susan M. Knight, "The Homestay Component of Study Abroad: Three Perspectives," *Foreign Language Annals* 37, no. 2 (2004).

<sup>26</sup> Kinginger, *Language and Study Abroad*.

<sup>27</sup> Inmaculada Pertusa-Seva and Melissa A. Stewart, "Virtual Study Abroad 101: Expanding the Horizons of the Spanish Curriculum," *Foreign Language Annals* 33, no. 4 (2000).

<sup>28</sup> Catherine C. Fraser, "Study Abroad: An Attempt to Measure the Gains," *German as a Foreign Language Journal* 1 (2002); Kinginger, *Language and Study Abroad*.

<sup>29</sup> Kinginger, *Language and Study Abroad*; Knight and Schmidt-Rinehart, "Enhancing the Homestay".

<sup>30</sup> Anthony Ogden, "The View from the Veranda: Understanding Today's Colonial Student," *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 15 (2007).

<sup>31</sup> Heather Willis Allen, "Language-Learning Motivation during Short-Term Study Abroad: An Activity Theory Perspective," *Foreign Language Annals* 43, no. 1 (2010).

### **Heritage Language Learners: General Research**

HLLs are a specific group of L2 learners who often possess distinctive reasons for studying a certain language. Most SLA researchers agree that HLLs are those who have a cultural or ethnic connection to their L2, such as second generation Korean Americans who are studying Korean, but beyond this general definition there are several classification schemas. Valdès defined HLLs as language learners who can speak or at least understand their L2 prior to formally studying it, and come to the classroom already bilingual to some degree.<sup>32</sup> Noels adopted a broader definition in her study, and considered HLLs to be those learning a language that was spoken by past family generations.<sup>33</sup>

Reynolds, Howard, and Deák incorporated both of these definitions in their study, in which HLLs were divided into two categories – broadly-defined HLLs and narrowly-defined HLLs – because they considered heritage to be an important variable that needed to be examined in both a broad and narrow sense.<sup>34</sup> Broadly-defined HLLs were classified as those learners with family or heritage connections to their target language, the majority (85%) of whom had little to no exposure to the L2 growing up in the home. Narrowly-defined HLLs, consisting of 34% of the total HLLs, were those who were exposed to the language in the home during their formative years. A third group consisted of non-HLLs, who were defined as those to whom the two HLL categories did not apply.

### **Heritage Language Learners: Hebrew-Specific**

In the aforementioned study by Reynolds, et al., 17 of the 401 students surveyed were Hebrew learners, of which 16 were broadly-defined HLLs, none were narrowly-defined HLLs, and only one was a non-HLL.<sup>35</sup> This ratio of learners is fairly representative of typical Hebrew learning contexts in the United States. Furthermore, according to the 2011 student survey of the National Middle East Language Resource Center, 72% of the 62 students surveyed either agreed or strongly agreed that Hebrew was important to

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<sup>32</sup> Guadalupe Valdès, "Heritage Language Students: Profiles and Possibilities," in *Heritage Languages in America: Preserving a National Resource*, ed. Joy Kreeft Peyton, Donald A. Ranard, and Scott McGinnis (Washington, DC: Center for Applied Linguistics/Delta Systems, 2001).

<sup>33</sup> Kimberly A. Noels, "Orientations to Learning German: Heritage Language Learning and Motivational Substrates," *Canadian Modern Language Review* 62, no. 2 (2005).

<sup>34</sup> Rachel R. Reynolds, Kathryn M. Howard, and Julia Deák, "Heritage Language Learners in First-Year Foreign Language Courses: A Report of General Data across Learner Subtypes," *Foreign Language Annals* 42, no. 2 (2009).

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*

them because of their ethnic heritage.<sup>36</sup> Accordingly, it is worthwhile to gain a better understanding of HLLs who study Hebrew, and how they differ from non-HLLs.

Historically, there exists a close connection between Hebrew and Judaism. Although the Jews have spoken a number of languages throughout their history, Hebrew has always held a prominent position in Jewish culture and religion;<sup>37</sup> some researchers have even expressed that Hebrew is associated exclusively with Jews.<sup>38</sup>

Many American Jews in the U.S. are descended from Ashkenazi Jews who came from Eastern Europe and spoke Yiddish.<sup>39</sup> Consequently, Yiddish was the primary language taught in U.S. Jewish education until the focus was switched to Hebrew due to the growing importance of Israel and Zionism in the Jewish world. Efforts to produce large numbers of American Jews who are proficient in Hebrew have been largely unsuccessful; relatively few speak or read any Hebrew.<sup>40</sup> There also exists a strong distinction between Israeli Jews and American Jews, who are sometimes indifferent or averse to Israeli ideologies and culture. Furthermore, given these differences, it is unclear to some American Jews why the Israeli culture and language is a prominent part of classroom instruction.<sup>41</sup> Because of these complexities and tensions, there is a clear need to better understand the motivations and identities of Hebrew L2 learners in the U.S.

### **Study Abroad: Israel-Specific**

Although research in this area has been sparse, a number of trends arise from this literature. As discussed earlier, most students travel to Israel for SA due

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<sup>36</sup> R. Kirk Belnap, "National Middle East Language Resource Center (NMEELRC) Survey of Hebrew Students" (Survey, Brigham Young University, 2011).

<sup>37</sup> Sharon Avni, "Toward an Understanding of Hebrew Language Education: Ideologies, Emotions, and Identity," *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 208 (2011).

<sup>38</sup> Moshe Anisfeld and Wallace E. Lambert, "Social and Psychological Variables in Learning Hebrew," *The Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology* 63, no. 3 (1961).

<sup>39</sup> Walter P. Zenner, "Jewishness in America: Ascription and Choice," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 8, no. 1 (1985).

<sup>40</sup> Lewis Glinert, "Smashing the Idols: Toward a Need-Based Method for Teaching Hebrew as Heritage," *Journal of Jewish Education* 65, no. 3 (1999); Elana Shohamy, "Contextual and Pedagogical Factors for Learning and Maintaining Jewish Languages in the United States," *Journal of Jewish Education* 65, no. 3 (1999).

<sup>41</sup> Bernard Spolsky, "Language Policy and the Teaching of Hebrew," in *Issues in the Acquisition and Teaching of Hebrew*, ed. Avital Feuer, Sharon Armon-Lotem, and Bernard Dov Cooperman (Bethesda, Maryland: University Press of Maryland, 2009).

to their heritage; Hebrew is often a secondary consideration.<sup>42</sup> Two other notable issues for this SA context are that the majority of Israelis can converse in English, requiring greater commitment from learners to speak Hebrew,<sup>43</sup> and SA sojourns in Israel are often short. As a result, few students return from SA in Israel with significant gains in their Hebrew competence.<sup>44</sup>

Many HLLs are already somewhat familiar with Israel and its culture when they begin SA, and expect to integrate fairly easily due to a shared identity of Jewishness. Once in Israel, however, many past students have been surprised and discouraged by brusque encounters with Israelis and struggled to find a place within the Israeli culture.<sup>45</sup> More recently, this experience appears to have improved, since many SA students to Israel have gained more positive views toward Israel as a result of SA.<sup>46</sup>

### Motivation

Individual learner differences have repeatedly been shown to play a profound role in language learning;<sup>47</sup> one of the most important of these differences pertains to the concept of student motivation. Motivation was once investigated as a static variable, but current research acknowledges that motivation is dynamic, and it changes multiple times in the course of learning an L2.<sup>48</sup> This variable is crucial to SA research, since students will only progress in their language study to the extent that they are motivated at any given time.

Motivation is highly relevant to the context of American university students traveling on SA to Israel. As discussed previously, since many of the grandparents or great-grandparents of American Jews have a Yiddish-speaking heritage,<sup>49</sup> it can be challenging to find motivators for American

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<sup>42</sup> Barry Chazan, "The Israeli Trip as Jewish Education," *Agenda Jewish Education* 1 (1992); Erik H. Cohen, "Tourism and Religion: A Case Study—Visiting Students in Israeli Universities," *Journal of Travel Research* 42, no. 1 (2003).

<sup>43</sup> Bernard Spolsky and Elana Shohamy, *The Languages of Israel: Policy, Ideology and Practice* (Clevedon: Multilingual Matters, 1999).

<sup>44</sup> Smadar Donitsa-Schmidt and Maggie Vadish, "North American Students in Israel: An Evaluation of a Study Abroad Experience," *Frontiers: The Interdisciplinary Journal of Study Abroad* 11 (2005).

<sup>45</sup> Dov Friedlander, Penina Morag-Talmon, and Daphne Ruth Moshayov, *The One-Year Program in Israel: An Evaluation* (New York: The American Jewish Committee, 1991); Simon N. Herman, *American Students in Israel* (New York: Cornell University Press, 1970).

<sup>46</sup> Donitsa-Schmidt and Maggie Vadish, "American Students in Israel".

<sup>47</sup> Rod Ellis, "Individual Differences in Second Language Learning," in *The Handbook of Applied Linguistics*, ed. Alan Davies and Catherine Elder (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004); Rebecca L. Oxford and Madeline Ehrman, "Second Language Research on Individual Differences," *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* 13 (1993).

<sup>48</sup> Kinginger, *Language and Study Abroad*.

<sup>49</sup> Shohamy, "Maintaining Jewish Languages".

Jews to study Hebrew. Thus it has been difficult to promote the development of Hebrew proficiency alongside an exploration of Jewish identity while abroad. Motivation is also vital for non-HLLs, but little empirically is known about them within the Hebrew context.

### **Anxiety**

The relationship between anxiety and other learner variables is very complex. Nevertheless, past research has suggested that SA can actually detract from rather than enhance language learning if students often feel anxiety.<sup>50</sup> In addition, speaking with members of the host community - including host families - can increase anxiety.<sup>51</sup> It has been argued that SA learners are drawn to SA programs that will provide the most amenities and cause the least anxiety.<sup>52</sup> On the other hand, SA has also been shown to reduce anxiety and empower learners to be more confident L2 users.<sup>53</sup> Thus the variable of anxiety and its effect on learners can be quite unpredictable.

### **3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

This study investigates the following research questions:

1. In what ways does heritage and non-heritage status impact learners' linguistic and cultural development during SA?
2. What role do anxiety, motivation, and the length of SA have in this development?
3. Do students feel that the pre-SA classroom experience was adequate preparation for SA?

### **4. METHODOLOGY**

#### **Participants**

This study initially included 19 participants, but four were excluded from the analysis because they only finished a small portion of the survey. The remaining 15 were current or recently graduated university students, who

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<sup>50</sup> Heather Willis Allen and Carol Herron, "A Mixed Methodology Investigation of the Linguistic and Affective Outcomes of Summer Study Abroad," *Foreign Language Annals* 36, no. 3 (2003).

<sup>51</sup> Sharon Wilkinson, "Emerging Questions about Study Abroad," *ADFL Bulletin* 32, no. 1 (2000).

<sup>52</sup> Ogden, "Today's Colonial Student".

<sup>53</sup> Allen and Herron, "Outcomes of Summer Abroad"; Robert C. Gardner, Padric C. Smythe, and G. R. Brunet, "Intensive Second Language Study: Effects on Attitudes, Motivation and French Achievement," *Language Learning* 27, no. 2 (1977).

were 19-31 years of age, and included 8 females, 6 males, and one who left their gender blank. Ten universities from all over the U.S. were represented by the mixed group. Five of these students had finished their degrees, and four were graduate students; the rest were in their undergraduate studies, most commonly in their senior year. All of the participants were born in the U.S.

These learners had a variety of majors: only two majored in Hebrew, four had majors that directly dealt with the ancient or modern Middle East, and three focused on Jewish studies. Several of the students had multiple majors. Only eight students reported minors, including two in Hebrew, and two in Jewish studies. Finally, 8 of the participants were HLLs, and 7 non-HLLs. The heritage distinction was determined by the survey question, "Would you consider yourself a heritage learner of Hebrew (with an ethnic or heritage connection to Hebrew)?" Although this distinction is not always straightforward, an analysis of responses illustrated their accuracy in determining this. For more specific details about these 15 participants, see Table 1 in the results section of this paper.

### **Data collection**

Three types of data were collected for this study, in order to triangulate the data:

1. A survey consisting of three sections. The first section requested basic demographic information; the second section sought L2 information, including self-reported proficiency both pre- and post-SA,<sup>54</sup> academic and non-academic exposure to Hebrew, and perceptions of heritage status; the third section examined SA information, including reasons for SA, the length of stay, living situation, types of interactions, and perceived changes in levels of motivation and anxiety as a result of SA (which employed a 7-point Likert scale). This last section also inquired into the efficacy of Hebrew language and culture studies before SA, both as a fulfillment of classroom requirements and as a personal endeavor outside of these requirements. The survey was partly homegrown, and partly adapted from prior surveys on SA and heritage,<sup>55</sup> surveys about L2

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<sup>54</sup> This self-reporting schema followed the rating scale developed within the 2012 ACTFL proficiency guidelines. There was a link to these guidelines in the survey, for learners who chose to refer to them.

<sup>55</sup> Amy Beausoleil, "Understanding Heritage and Ethnic Identity Development through Study Abroad: The Case of South Korea" (Doctoral dissertation, University of California, Santa Barbara, 2008); Kirstin Heather Moreno, "The Study Abroad Experiences of Heritage Language Learners: Discourses of Identity" (Doctoral dissertation, University of Texas at Austin, 2009).

anxiety,<sup>56</sup> and surveys regarding L2 motivation.<sup>57</sup> In order to recruit participants, emails that explained the study and contained a link to the online survey were sent out to various Hebrew organizations and faculty; some then forwarded the message to students who had recently studied Hebrew in Israel. From there, snowball sampling was used to recruit others.

2. Semistructured interviews with 7 participants, which lasted between 15 minutes to an hour depending on participant availability. These interviews served to clarify survey responses and provide more qualitative details, and probed deeper into heritage status, learner histories with Hebrew, and the specifics of the SA experience. Copious notes were taken during these interviews, which were conducted in person where possible, by Skype, or by phone. Afterward, these notes were emailed to participants to ensure their accuracy through member checking.
3. Writings about the SA experience, which consisted of blog entries or emails to friends or family during SA. At the end of the survey, participants were asked to provide these writings if they chose; four females shared blog entries (2 HLLs and 2 non-HLLs), and two males (1 HLL and 1 non-HLL) shared emails. These writings gave greater insight into participants' daily interactions, reflections, and changes in perception during SA in Israel.

### Data Analysis

In order to analyze both the quantitative and qualitative components of this mixed-methods study, a variety of methods were employed. First, statistical analyses were performed on the quantitative portion of the survey data, including: (1) A factor analysis, in order to compare variables more readily, (2) A series of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients to test the relationship between all variables involved, (3) A series of independent sample T-tests comparing heritage status to the other variables, and (4) A series of two-way, between-subjects factorial analyses of variance

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<sup>56</sup> Jennifer D. Ewald, "Foreign Language Learning Anxiety in Upper-Level Classes: Involving Students as Researchers," *Foreign Language Annals* 40, no. 1 (2007); Elaine K. Horwitz, Michael B. Horwitz, and Joann Cope, "Foreign Language Classroom Anxiety," *The Modern Language Journal* 70, no. 2 (1986).

<sup>57</sup> Zoltán Dörnyei and Richard Clément, "Motivational Characteristics of Learning Different Target Languages: Results of a Nationwide Survey," in *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition*, ed. Zoltán Dörnyei and Richard Clément (Honolulu, HI: The University of Hawai'i, Second Language Teaching and Curriculum Center, 2001); Gardner, *Attitudes and Motivation*.

(ANOVAs) on the effect of heritage status and SA length on both overall and domain-specific proficiency gains.

Second, the qualitative data, including part of the survey, notes from the interviews, and the SA-related writings, was analyzed and coded for emerging patterns and categorized using inductive data analysis.<sup>58</sup> This was accomplished with the Dedoose software that was designed for mixed-methods research,<sup>59</sup> and a word processor for deeper textual analysis.

## 5. RESULTS

Several general trends arose from the factor analysis. For pre-SA language proficiencies, reading was considered the strongest domain ( $M=5.00$ ,  $SD=2.62$ ), and speaking the weakest ( $M=4.36$ ,  $SD=2.37$ ). The reported post-SA proficiencies had the same high and low (reading:  $M=7.27$ ,  $SD=1.91$ ; speaking:  $M=6.73$ ,  $SD=1.75$ ). Regarding improvements in proficiency, the highest was in listening, and the lowest in writing. In addition, the type of motivation with the highest increase as a result of SA was integrative motivation ( $M=5.93$ ,  $SD=1.07$ ). For SA-influenced increases in anxiety, the highest was in speaking with natives ( $M=3.53$ ,  $SD=1.77$ ), and the lowest in speaking with cohorts ( $M=2.93$ ,  $SD=1.033$ ).

An independent-samples T-test that used heritage status as a between factor considered the relationship between HLLs and non-HLLs in their proficiencies, motivations, anxieties, and perceptions on pre-SA preparation. Several differences emerged, although none of them were statistically significant. Although non-significant, there are several noteworthy points from it: First, HLLs averaged to be more proficient pre-SA than non-HLLs in all four language domains, but post-SA were behind non-HLLs in all of them. Second, HLLs reported a greater average increase in all three anxiety categories than non-HLLs. HLLs found the greatest increase in anxiety toward speaking to natives, and non-HLLs had the greatest increase in anxiety toward speaking with the L2 teacher. Third, both non-HLLs and HLLs experienced the greatest increase in integrative motivation.

As far as pre-SA linguistic and cultural preparation, non-HLLs felt more than HLLs that their pre-SA L2 classroom experience had prepared them linguistically, although neither group rated this particularly highly on a scale

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<sup>58</sup> Alison Mackey and Susan M. Gass, *Second Language Research: Methodology and Design* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>59</sup> Dedoose, Version 4.5.91, web application for managing, analyzing, and presenting qualitative and mixed method data (Los Angeles, CA: SocioCultural Research Consultants, LLC, 2012).

from 1 to 7 (non-HLLs:  $M=5.43$ ,  $SD=1.40$ ; HLLs:  $M=5.13$ ,  $SD=1.36$ ). This was nearly the same for cultural preparation (non-HLLs:  $M=5.43$ ,  $SD=0.97$ ; HLLs:  $M=5.25$ ,  $SD=1.58$ ). Cultural preparation at the individual level (outside of classroom activities) on average favored HLLs (non-HLLs:  $M=5.17$ ,  $SD=0.75$ ; HLLs:  $M=5.57$ ,  $SD=1.27$ ), although non-HLLs felt better prepared in their individual preparation with the L2 (non-HLLs:  $M=5.33$ ,  $SD=1.37$ ; HLLs:  $M=4.88$ ,  $SD=0.84$ ).

The series of Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients conducted on the multiple variables in the data did not find any significant relationships. For example, the length of SA was not found to be a factor in motivation or anxiety changes, and a negative relationship was not found between anxiety and motivation.

The first ANOVA revealed a significant effect of heritage status (HLLs vs. non-HLLs) and SA length on overall proficiency improvement,  $F(1, 10) = 7.882$ ,  $p = .019$ ,  $\eta^2 = .441$ . Regarding gains in L2 proficiency within the four domains, other ANOVAs found significant effects for heritage status and SA length on listening ( $F(1, 11) = 8.685$ ,  $p = .013$ ,  $\eta^2 = .441$ ), reading ( $F(1, 11) = 10.469$ ,  $p = .008$ ,  $\eta^2 = .488$ ), and writing ( $F(1, 11) = 5.883$ ,  $p = .034$ ,  $\eta^2 = .348$ ). Only speaking had no significant effect,  $F(1, 10) = 4.148$ ,  $p = .069$ ,  $\eta^2 = .293$ . Heritage status alone did not show significant effects on proficiency improvement, nor did SA length alone – they only did when considered together. These results indicate that, for this study, heritage status did determine proficiency improvement as long as it was adjusted to account for SA length.

The qualitative data yielded additional insights into this group of learners. In reviewing learner responses, the proportions for Hebrew broadly-defined and narrowly-defined HLLs in the study of Reynolds, et al. seemed to be fairly true here: A few students had been exposed to a minimal amount of Hebrew in the home in their formative years, but the majority can be classified as broadly-defined HLLs.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps because of the volunteer survey response, there is also an unusually high percentage of non-HLLs in this study.

For their SA, these students spent differing amounts of time in Israel, but the most common response (from 5 students) was an academic year. Other students ranged anywhere from a few weeks to six years. Furthermore, ten of the fifteen participants had been to Israel prior to this SA experience, from one to seven times for anywhere from ten days to a year. These trips were for a number of reasons, including for North American Federation of

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<sup>60</sup> Reynolds, et al., "Heritage Learners in First Year".

Temple Youth (NFTY) trips, to volunteer, to see family, as trips with family or friends, on tours related to archaeology, or to go to *ulpanim*. HLLs were more likely to have been to Israel previously. All but two of these students had also traveled abroad extensively; at least five of them had been to over six countries.

The living situation of these students in Israel varied; eight of these students lived in university dormitories during SA. The rest lived alone, lived with roommates or family, in hotels or hostels, or on *kibbutzim*. None of them lived with host families for more than a small part of their stay. There were mixed responses about the efficacy of living in dorms for learning Hebrew, usually depending on whether their roommates were cohorts or Israelis. Greater detail about these participants is provided in Table 1, including their relevant demographic data, the amount of Modern Hebrew classes they took before SA, their self-assessed language proficiency score before and after SA (calculated as their average score for speaking, listening, reading, and writing combined), the proficiency gain or difference between these two scores, the length of their SA, and their living situation while there.

One of the most common issues found in the data concerned the high amount of Israelis who spoke English to the American students during SA. Nine of the fifteen participants explicitly expressed frustration or difficulty carrying on conversations with the host community in Hebrew, since Israelis often were either impatient with learners' proficiency levels or desired to practice English. Furthermore, six of the participants mentioned high L1 usage by their cohorts, which detracted from their learning. Another issue was the brusqueness of some Israelis, which demotivated and alienated some of the learners.

Those who seemed most satisfied with their experience actively sought out speaking opportunities whenever they could, such as by conversing with janitors, storekeepers, or taxi drivers. These learners tried their best to live with Israelis, and if that were not possible, they worked to use the L2 with their cohorts. In addition, several satisfied learners sought out meaningful connections within the host community, and joined CoPs based on their interests.

**Table 1. Participant Background and SA Data**

Name	Age	Acad level	Gender	HLL	Major(s)	Minor(s)	Pre-SA Classes	Pre-SA Prof Av	Post-SA Prof Av	Prof Gain	SA Length	SA Living Situation
Sarah	23	Grad student	F	Y	Jewish Education-Day School track		2	4	5.75	1.75	3	Dorms
Elizabeth	19	Sophomore	F	Y	Hospitality & Tourism Management	Jewish & Environ Studies	4	8.25	8.75	0.5	4	Dorms
Mary	21	Senior	F	Y	Nutritional Sciences & Judaic Studies	Chemistry	0	5.75	6.75	1	3	Alone
Leah	24	Graduated	F	Y	Interdisciplinary honors program		6	7.5	9.25	1.75	4	Dorms
Ruth	26	Graduated	F	Y	History Teaching	Hebrew, Geography	2	5	7.5	1.5	2	Dorms
Joshua	31	Grad student	M	Y	Near Eastern Languages & Cultures	Religions of the Ancient Med	0	4.25	5.5	1.25	2	Dorms
Daniel	20	Junior	M	Y	Film Production; Psychology		2	3	4	1	2	W/ a roommate
Michael	20	Freshman	M	Y	Business & Political Economy		5	7	7.25	0.25	4	Apt w/ US students
Jessica	21	Senior	F	N	Intl & Global Studies		0	7.75	9.75	2	4	Dorms, alone
Anna	25	Grad student	F	N	Middle Eastern Studies		4	1.25	5.5	4.25	4	Dorms
Jane	26	Graduated	F	N	Eng Linguistics, Bible & Ancient Near East	Music	Many	1	8.25	7.25	5	Apt w/ her family
Alex	27	Grad student		N	Hebrew Studies		6	7	9	2	3	Hotels, <i>kibbutzim</i>
Jose	24	Graduated	M	N	Jewish Studies, Political Communication	Hebrew	4	3.75	5.75	2	1	Alone
Steven	31	Graduated	M	N	History/Theology	Jewish Studies	0	1.75	8.5	6.75	5	Youth Hostel
Matt	20	Senior	M	N	Philosophy	Jewish Studies	3	3.25	4.25	1	2	Dorms

Proficiency Codes: 1-Novice low    2-Novice mid    3-Novice high    4-Intermed low    5-Intermed mid  
6-Intermed high    7-Advanced low    8-Advanced mid    9-Advanced high    10-Superior

SA Length Codes: 1-Less than a month    2-Summer    3-Semester  
4-Academic year    5-More than a year

In order to provide a more detailed view of this wide variety of learners, the next section will explore the experiences of six students, who provided

the most data by participating in all three phases of the study (3 HLLs, 3 non-HLLs; 4 females, 2 males):

### **Elizabeth**

Elizabeth grew up speaking some Hebrew with her family and friends, and she always felt most comfortable with Hebrew speakers. She continued to study the language in Jewish day school, where her skills in Hebrew reading and writing developed. She later took two advanced university-level Hebrew classes from Israeli teachers; this time was helpful to her, but she felt she could have participated more.

Elizabeth went to Israel for a year as part of a gap year with *kivunim*, because of her deep connection to Judaism and Hebrew as an HLL. During her time in Israel, Elizabeth found several opportunities to use Hebrew outside of the classroom with her Israeli family members, with *shuk* vendors, and at the bus station. Although Elizabeth made many efforts to converse in Hebrew, she found herself at times using English when others did. This left her with a sense that she had not taken full advantage of the Hebrew experience in Israel, despite her sizeable gains.

At first Elizabeth felt that she was treated like a tourist or a student on *Taglit*. She was anxious about making mistakes and sometimes made fun of, but she integrated better when she was able to assert herself and act "like a real Israeli". She found that if she acted like she belonged, Israelis treated her as such. In general, she felt very welcomed and at home in Israel. One way in which Elizabeth found a CoP was in her love of cooking; she went to local restaurants while in Israel and talked to locals about food in Hebrew, using a variety of culinary terms. She left Israel with even more motivation than before.

### **Mary**

Mary was exposed to some Hebrew in the home, and went to Jewish preschool and Jewish day school. Before SA, she took four courses in Hebrew at the university level. All of her formal exposure to Hebrew focused heavily on grammar and textbooks. As a result she could speak Hebrew to an extent, but her speech was broken. At least partly because of this experience, she would have preferred more of an emphasis on speaking and everyday Hebrew.

Mary went to Israel for a semester in order to be immersed in the Israeli culture and become fluent in Hebrew. During the semester, she studied in an *ulpan* and spoke Hebrew as much as possible in service encounters and with

Israeli family members. Almost instantly she felt integrated into Israeli society and "automatically welcomed" as a Jew. She also had an Israeli boyfriend, and this helped with the integration.

During her stay, she often traveled with several Americans who were less proficient than her and it was difficult to strictly speak in the L2. Whenever Israelis would address her in English, she would try to keep the conversation in Hebrew. Mary felt that her level of Hebrew gain fell below her expectations, largely because of her time around American roommates. If she could repeat the experience she would room with Israelis. The SA experience left Mary with an even deeper appreciation of Hebrew and Israel, and a firmer sense of her own identity.

### **Anna**

Anna went on SA to Israel with a background in Middle Eastern Studies, after already being exposed to a number of diverse cultures and languages. Although she had taken a variety of courses in Biblical Hebrew, she was not exposed to Modern Hebrew academically at all before SA. Anna, a non-HLL, traveled to Israel as a quick way to learn Hebrew and experience the Israeli culture firsthand, and took three *ulpanim* and some university classes in Hebrew with Israelis over the course of a year. While there, she lived alone. Although initially there was a learning curve, Biblical Hebrew quickly provided a bridge to improved Hebrew proficiency.

Anna's initial perceptions of Hebrew changed as she encountered the clash of history, politics, and culture in Israel – particularly in Jerusalem, which she found to be "a very exhausting city to live in". Many of her conversations were "saturated" with this tension. This caused her motivation to decrease somewhat and made integration difficult. Many people assumed she was Jewish, but her non-heritage status hindered her learning, in that it was difficult not having the cultural and religious understanding that HLLs grow up with. Additional frustrations and anxieties from her sojourn included trying to communicate in the L2 with non-native immigrants or cohorts, who often had difficult accents or lower proficiencies. Some of her encounters with Israelis were also unpleasant, because they replied in English or belittled her Hebrew speaking; in these cases she replied back in Hebrew. Overall, Anna made important gains in her Hebrew proficiency, but struggled with the cultural aspects of her experience.

**Jessica**

As a non-HLL, Jessica's first exposure to Hebrew was at her university. She took six classes there before going on SA; these classes were very small and heavily focused on immersion in conversation at early levels, and academic content at more advanced levels. Jessica was drawn to the structure and logic of Hebrew, and she felt that her class gave her an adequate linguistic base to succeed in Israel.

Jessica studied Hebrew in Israel for an academic year, including one semester in a university with Israelis, and a second semester in an immersion program set up by her home university. The second semester was especially beneficial for her, since she started it by signing a pledge to only speak Hebrew. In her encounters with Israelis she was able to use the pledge as an excuse to maintain the conversation in Hebrew, even if Israelis laughed about it. In general Israelis reacted positively to her extreme efforts to learn Hebrew, and provided her with plenty of scaffolding. She felt that the host community was very warm and welcoming, and her fascination with everything impelled her forward.

Her living situation also changed from one semester to the next from L1-speaking roommates to Israelis - which was also beneficial to her learning. Furthermore, she was able to join CoPs through her interests in fitness and church, which helped her form meaningful connections. During the experience, Jessica was acutely aware of her status as a non-HLL, but it only seemed to affect her cultural interactions and not her linguistic efforts. A large part of her wishes for the future chance to live in Israel, but since she is not Jewish she feels this is "a stretch". At the end of SA, Jessica left with strong Hebrew proficiency and a stronger connection to Israel.

**Joshua**

Although Joshua was not exposed to Hebrew before his university studies, he reported a family connection that suggested a Jewish heritage. Joshua took four university classes in Hebrew before SA; these classes were focused on immersion. In contrast to Mary, Joshua suffered somewhat from the lack of grammatical explanations, which suited his learning style better. As a graduate student, his main focus was in historical Hebrew and ancient religion.

Joshua went to Israel for a summer to increase his knowledge of Israeli scholarship and improve his Hebrew. Upon arrival, he was shocked by the brusqueness of Israelis and their mocking of his Hebrew. However, this feeling quickly became a heightened awareness of the complexities of the

situation there. His linguistic experience was fractured: He experienced only Hebrew in the classroom, mostly English in his apartment, and English from Israelis. He also used the strategy of responding in Hebrew, but Israelis persisted in English.

During his time there, Joshua felt a strange combination of familiarity and foreignness about his surroundings. He felt that Israelis accepted him, since they assumed he was of Jewish heritage because of his adopted Hebrew name; his connections to Israel and its rich culture and history grew, but at the same time he deeply missed the US and his family there. Ultimately, Joshua felt that he was "too much of an American and home-body" and a "crazy Yankee monkey" to feel at home outside of the US. Thus he was never able to feel integrated fully. Much of his experience was marked by sightseeing and excursions, in a sort of "grand tour" mentality<sup>61</sup> – although this seemed to fit well with his higher interests in history and archaeology, and his identity as a scholar of the past was reinforced.

### Steven

Steven, as a non-HLL with his own deep religious convictions, was drawn to Hebrew in order to learn to read the Bible and other Jewish literature; this grew out of a desire to better understand Jewish-Christian relations. He had no classes in Modern Hebrew prior to SA, although he did take some Biblical Hebrew and he had some Israeli friends in college.

Steven initially had an intense desire to study in Israel for a year, which derived from what he described as his "somewhat naive Christian Zionist" notions about Israel. This sojourn turned into six years as his desire for integration grew. Steven made his way through all of the *ulpanim* proficiency levels while applying the Hebrew he learned with his Israeli roommate and Israeli girlfriend; these connections were especially important for his learning, since only some of the host community would correct his Hebrew. In addition, Steven observed that initially all Israelis spoke English with him - especially when he hesitated in the L2. Over time as he persisted in his efforts, Israelis became more likely to respond in Hebrew.

Steven eventually felt well integrated linguistically and culturally. He went to great lengths to assimilate into Israeli society permanently, but his position as a non-HLL made it impossible for him. Throughout the experience, he felt like both a foreigner and an "Israeli". His attachment to the US weakened as his motivation toward Israel grew, and he experienced

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<sup>61</sup> Ogden, "Today's Colonial Student", 49.

extreme anxiety as he fought with his own identity and the pressure to adapt in a different society. These feelings have remained in him.

## 6. DISCUSSION

These findings suggest that heritage status has a significant role in shaping both an individual's L2 learning history and SA experience in Israel, just as it has been found to shape learner perceptions.<sup>62</sup> First, HLLs began SA with a higher average language proficiency than non-HLLs; this was probably due to the greater likelihood for HLLs to be exposed to Hebrew throughout their life, whether within their home, with families or friends, or in organized Jewish education, including Jewish day school, heritage trips to Israel, and Jewish camp. Perhaps a continual exposure to Judaism also caused HLLs to feel better prepared individually for the C2 than non-HLLs. On the other hand, non-HLLs felt better prepared through their own linguistic efforts, and they made greater linguistic gains during SA. This may be because HLLs highly value a sense of community, while non-HLLs find competence very important.<sup>63</sup>

Past studies have found that some host communities may speak English instead of the L2 out of desire to practice the language,<sup>64</sup> or because they view L2 learners as incapable or deficient.<sup>65</sup> Given that the majority of Israelis speak English at least to some level,<sup>66</sup> this was also found to be a considerable factor in learner motivation and anxiety in this study. Learners often found less success coercing Israelis to speak in Hebrew by responding in the L2, at least until their proficiencies reached a certain point. The example provided by Jessica of using a language pledge seemed to be particularly effective for overcoming this.

Lastly, this study provided evidence for the importance of time and effort for attainment; students who exerted the most effort to learn the language and integrate experienced the most success in doing so. Positioning oneself in the L2 was also found to be important,<sup>67</sup> as in the case of Elizabeth, in which if she acted like she belonged, Israelis were more likely to make her

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<sup>62</sup> Kimberly A. Noels, "The Internalization of Language Learning into the Self and Social Identity," *Motivation, Language Identity and the L2 Self* (2009).

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Kinginger, "Americans in France"; Librande, "Journal Reflections Abroad".

<sup>65</sup> Kinginger, *Language and Study Abroad*.

<sup>66</sup> Spolsky and Shohamy, *Languages of Israel*.

<sup>67</sup> Kinginger, *Language and Study Abroad*.

feel integrated. Forming meaningful connections and joining CoPs also seemed to predict success and satisfaction.<sup>68</sup>

## **7. IMPLICATIONS**

There are several implications from this study. The most significant relates to heritage status: Since it is apparent that heritage status shapes the way learners approach learning the L2 and C2, teachers need to consider the heritage status of students. This is especially true for the Hebrew context, where heritage is fundamental for many learners in their motivations. One way to gauge this heritage status is through pre-semester surveys, which can give teachers a good idea about their body of learners and help them to tailor their curriculum to their students.

Furthermore, there are a number of implications for the pre-SA classroom. Insights from both the data analysis and learner responses indicated that many students felt there was a gap between their academic preparations and SA. Teachers can bridge this gap by providing more meaningful engagement with the L2 and C2, through authentic texts, multimedia, and technology; they can also aid students in forming meaningful connections with the host community. Finally, it is advisable for instructors to provide as much adequate preparation for the SA experience as possible, so students are already aware of foreseeable obstacles – such as the high degree of English learners are likely to encounter.

## **8. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

This exploratory study has a number of limitations. First, only a small body of Hebrew learners participated in it, which made statistical analysis more difficult and affected the generalizability of the results. In addition, from among SA programs, students, and host communities, only one voice was heard within the SA experience. Data was also collected from them after their SA experience, so they needed to try to recollect their earlier proficiencies and mindsets. In the future, it would be helpful to create a longitudinal study with more participants and voices.

Furthermore, there are inherent weaknesses in the instruments used along with their strengths - which is part of the reason why three sources were included to complement each other. This study was also carried out by only one researcher, so there was no confirmability. Finally, reliance on self-

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<sup>68</sup> Whitworth, "Access to Language Learning".

reporting has both its advantages and disadvantages. There may also have been a self-selection effect in which the most motivated Hebrew students responded, since this research was unfunded.<sup>69</sup>

There are many areas for future research in this area. More data and participants are needed to confirm these differences between HLLs and non-HLLs, and a longitudinal study would uncover several effects that were undoubtedly lost through a post-SA analysis. An increase in the amount of instruments used, particularly for proficiency, would also be helpful. Furthermore, future studies can consider the study abroad experience in Israel through not only students but also teachers, programs, and host communities.

## 9. CONCLUSION

It is apparent that the context of American students in Israel offers unique results to an under-researched area. An analysis of the perceptions and experiences of HLLs and non-HLLs appears to reveal differences in their self-constructions, motivations, and anxieties, and even in the way that SA shapes their identities and views. As illustrated in past research, the ability of students to exert effort in their language learning and integration and form meaningful connections within CoPs has a strong relationship with their success and attainment in the L2;<sup>70</sup> these efforts are also affected by the host community, who in some ways act differently toward HLLs and non-HLLs.

The area of SA in SLA research is complicated and replete with variables. It is a challenge to select certain variables from among many, and to find an optimal way of measuring them. This study includes a few such variables and both confirms several past studies and adds unique insights from an underrepresented L2 group and context, in an attempt to open up inquiry and deeper thinking about SA and heritage status for both Hebrew teachers and SLA researchers.

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<sup>69</sup> Zoltán Dörnyei, *Questionnaires in Second Language Research: Construction, Administration, and Processing* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003).

<sup>70</sup> Kinginger, *Language and Study Abroad*; Whitworth, "Access to Language Learning".

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