MOTIVATION AND AFFECTIVE VARIABLES IN ARABIC LANGUAGE LEARNING FOR IRAQ WAR VETERANS: LANGUAGE LEARNING EXPERIENCES INSIDE AND OUTSIDE THE CLASSROOM

DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

Since the inception of the Iraq War, the Department of Veteran Affairs estimates that over two million US military personnel have cycled through Iraq. This means that over two million American citizens have been exposed to Arabic language and culture for an extended period of time ranging from six months to two years. This exposure exceeds a majority of language study abroad programs, in Arabic and other languages. Current estimates from the Department of Veteran Affairs place the number of veterans taking advantage of their G.I. Bill benefits from 50% to 80% (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2005). A large percentage (estimates vary) of these military personnel return to the U.S. and use the G.I. Bill in order to attain a college degree (Mettler, 2005 & Humes, 2006) and many will study Arabic. What is it about their exposure to the language and culture that motivates them to study the language as part of their college education? What affective factors inside and outside of the classroom play a role in their language learning? Very little research has been conducted in the area of veterans in the language classroom.

This study describes and explains the affective variables and motivational factors that lead Iraq war veterans to study Arabic language and culture after their initial deployment to Iraq and the Middle East region. Through the use of case study narratives,
this study identified the wide and varied cultural and linguistic experiences veterans have had in Iraq that play a role in their language learning. Close examination of the case studies led to some understanding how intercultural experiences between U.S. soldiers and Iraqi nationals contribute and relate to Iraq War veterans’ Arabic language learning motivation. Few studies exist in Arabic language learning motivation and there are no studies that focus on Iraq War veterans learning Arabic. Because of the growth and emphasis on Arabic language education, powerful sources such as the U.S. State Department and various intelligence agencies, have begun to encourage and fund Arabic language education, so more research in the area of Arabic language motivation is warranted.

Through the use of qualitative, narrative research methods, this study described why Iraq war veterans are studying Arabic language and culture and explained the affective and motivational variables in their learning. The study examined how their intercultural experiences affected their attitudes and perspectives toward Arabic language and culture. It documented their Arabic language and culture training prior to their deployments, explored their intercultural and linguistic experiences while deployed, and closely documented their post-deployment Arabic language training. The research involved two to three interviews for each veteran participant, focus group interviews, questionnaires and classroom observations.

The theoretical framework for this study came from work on language motivation by Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Dornyei’s (1996, 2003, & 2005), Allport’s contact hypothesis (1954), and Norton’s (2000) work in second language learning and personal identities formation/change. Also influential to this research was Pennycook’s (2001)

Results from the case study narratives indicate that there are ways to use the veteran experience to foster an inclusive environment in the critical language classroom. Understanding the context that these veterans bring to the Arabic language classroom helps language educators to better meet the needs and goals of veteran students. As teachers we can draw on our knowledge of the affective variables that influence and motivate our veteran students and use the knowledge to improve curriculum design of and classroom activities in language teaching. There is a unique burden on professional language educators in critical languages to produce proficient linguists that meet federal government needs. Also included are recommendations for further research. The study has broader implications for veteran higher education, K-12 education, foreign language education policy, foreign relations, diversity & equity in the classroom, and national security.
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There are many who have assisted me on this PhD journey. In many ways, this dissertation represents a community of practice, so to speak. Involved were professionals from a variety of disciplines and diverse backgrounds. Contributing to the work were small discussions and sharing of experiences with colleagues, friends, and family. It is through this community that we educate each other, and ourselves creating a mosaic of scholarship. Pieces of this larger community can be found throughout this work. It is important that I recognize those who have influenced and mentored me over the years. Without their support and encouragement, I would not have undertaken this task. It seems impossible to name every individual to whom I am thankful and indebted. But some deserve special recognition and are named below.

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Second, I owe a great debt to my family. The last few years have taken much time away from them. Their willingness to support me through this process is truly the most wonderful graduation gift. I especially owe thanks to my mother, Jane. I cannot repay the hours she spent reading, editing, and offering input on every word I have written. Our discussions about sentence structures, punctuation, and word phrases were all the more enjoyable because of her humor and her language expertise. Her years as a middle school English teacher elevate her to sainthood in my eyes. I cannot repay the support and patience she has shown over the years. I’m truly grateful for my father’s support and faith in me as well. A Vietnam veteran and a hero to me, his commitment to family and country always inspired me to see the best in myself and in others.
Third, I owe thanks to the members of the United States Marine Corps Lima Company unit out of Columbus, OH who served in Iraq in 2005. Their sacrifices and service are an inspiration to us all. Those that came home and studied Arabic language and culture prove that the members of Lima are a unique, elite group of soldiers, going above and beyond the call of duty to God and country. I also owe tremendous thanks to the veteran participants of my study. Their openness and willingness to share made this research possible. I hope that their voices are heard through this work and in turn they are given a voice in the body of research building around the veteran experience.

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**GLOSSARY**

**Active Duty:** refers to the status of a member of the military (any branch of service) who is conducting their military service on a full time basis

‘*Amiyyah:* refers to a dialect of the Arabic language not commonly written and culturally considered to be informal

**ALC:** abbreviation for Arabic Language and Culture

**Deployment:** refers to the relocation of military forces to a place of service other than the service members’ regular duty station

**Enlisted:** refers to a member of the military service whose rank is other than a commissioned officer or warrant officer

**Fus̱ha:** the Arabic term for Modern Standard Arabic (MSA – see below); sometimes is used to refer specifically to liturgical Arabic

**GI Bill/Montgomery GI Bill:** common name for the post-service educational benefits available to military service members

**In-Theater:** refers to military personnel who are geographically located in an area designated as a combat zone

**Intercultural Communication:** communication, either oral or physical, that occurs between members of two or more different linguistic and cultural groups

**Intercultural Experience:** experiences of individuals in different linguistic and cultural areas other than their own

**Intercultural Interaction:** actions and communications between individuals from two or more linguistic and cultural groups

**Integrative Motivation:** term referring to a student’s desire to integrate elements of the target language and culture into their own identity; sometimes referred to as ‘intrinsic’ motivation in education literature
**Instrumental Motivation:** term referring to a student’s language learning goals that mainly include gaining status or financial success with knowledge of the target language/culture; sometimes referred to as ‘extrinsic’ in Education literature

**Less Commonly Taught Language (LCTL):** generally refers to languages other than English, German, Spanish and French

**Target Language (L2):** term referring to the foreign language that a language learner is in the process of learning

**Modern Standard Arabic (MSA):** refers to the written and spoken formal Arabic language; sometimes referred to as the ‘linga-franca’ of Arabic

**Defense Language Aptitude Battery (DLAB):** a test given to military and government personnel to measure their aptitude in language learning

**Reservist:** refers to the status of a member of the military (any branch of service) who is conducting their military service primarily on a part-time basis

‘Terps: shortened from ‘interpreter,’ term used by military personnel to refer to contracted translators or interpreters

**Veteran:** refers to any person who has served either on active duty or reserve duty in the armed forces
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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Since the inception of the Iraq War, the Department of Veteran Affairs estimates that over two million US military personnel have cycled through Iraq\(^1\). This means that over two million American citizens have been exposed to Arabic language and cultures for an extended period of time, ranging from six months to two years. Their exposure exceeds a majority of language study abroad programs in Arabic and other languages. A large percentage (estimates vary) of these military personnel return to the U.S. and use the G.I. Bill in order to attain a college degree (Humes, 2006 & Mettler, 2005), and some of these veteran students will study Arabic. Current estimates from the Department of Veteran Affairs place the number of veterans taking advantage of their G.I. Bill benefits from 50% to 80% (Department of Veterans Affairs, 2005.) Why is a veteran motivated to study the language and culture of the region to which they were formerly deployed and may not return? What affective factors outside and inside the classroom play a role in motivating their language and culture learning? Little data exists which addresses these questions, and no specific data exists in the context of the Arabic language classroom.

After September 11\(^{th}\) 2001, interest in the study of Arabic language and culture in colleges and universities dramatically increased across the United States. With the

\(^1\) The Department of Defense does not release the exact numbers and these numbers reflect multiple deployments.
deployment of troops to Afghanistan and the subsequent US-led invasion of Iraq in March 2003, interest has steadily continued to grow, as evidenced by expanding enrollment figures and the greater number of classes offered in Arabic language, literature, and culture. Arabic is no longer considered a Less Commonly Taught Language (LCTL) according to the Modern Language Association (MLA, 2006.) The Modern Language Association (MLA) has reported that, as of November 2003, Arabic is the 10th most studied language in the nation (MLA, 2004.) The impact of September 11th and what has followed has affected awareness in the United States resulting in increasing interest in world affairs, increased funding for the study of Arabic, and intensified US involvement in the Arab world. The importance of learning the Arabic language has been dramatically demonstrated through exponential enrollment growth in Arabic language and culture courses and the subsequent increase in Arabic language course offerings. Therefore, it becomes important to explore what motivates students to learn the language and to address the reasons they decide to study the language (Al-Batal, 2003).

The following research study investigates and describes the language learning motivation of Iraq war veterans in the Arabic language classroom, their language learning experiences prior to enrolling in Arabic language coursework, and other affective variables that contribute to the context of their language classrooms. Of relevance to the research are the veterans’ own perceptions and attitudes towards Arabic language and culture (ALC) and the experiences they’ve had while in Iraq that influenced their academic decisions. Their deployments to Iraq (an Arabic speaking country), which ranged from six months to two years, exceed that of most study abroad programs. As
pointed out, every veteran participant in this study funds his or her education through the U.S. G.I. Bill. All these factors affect not only the context of the Arabic language classroom, but also the atmosphere of higher education, because, as more veterans return from Iraq, their increased numbers and unique experiences will make noticeable differences in the environments of college and university classrooms.

The U.S. Department of Education has little information on the enrollment trends of veterans returning from Iraq, so exact numbers of enrollments are yet unknown and unavailable. Changes to the U.S.G.I. Bill benefits in 2008 have increased incentives for veterans to continue their higher education. Over two million members of the U.S. military have cycled through Iraq since 2003. Just as their predecessors (World War II, Vietnam and Korea) contributed to the civic and civil landscape of the United States, Iraq war veterans may make a considerable impact on our society as veterans have done in the past (Humes, 2006). Their impact makes it important to research their experiences and to develop ways to make education more accessible, to make our higher education policies more supportive, and to discover what our veterans can contribute to the context of the classroom on a daily basis. My research project may not be able to address these larger issues in detail but can at least reveal part of the picture through the lens of the Arabic language classroom. Discovering their motivations to learn ALC post-deployment may have broader implications beyond just the Arabic language classroom. Therefore, as will be discussed further in a later section of this paper, the purpose of this study is to discover what has influenced these veterans to learn ALC post-deployment and what they contribute to the classroom context.
Motivation & Other Affective Variables

Language learning motivation is an affective variable in the language classroom, but it can be difficult to give a definitive explanation of language learning motivation. Motivation within the realm of social-psychology is used to refer to a psychological process that leads an individual to achieve a specific goal. For language learners, the individual language learner’s goals can take a number of forms such as communicative competence, textual analysis, or basic communication skills (Dornyei, 2003). For the purposes of this study, language-learning motivation refers to the various aspects of experiences (or, psychological processes) that lead them to achieve their language goals.

Affective variables in language learning include language anxiety, risk-taking, language aptitude, career goals, self-confidence in learning and motivation to learn (Samimy & Tabuse, 1992). Motivation studies generally include the effects of the aforementioned variables on individual language learning. One can find an abundance of studies regarding language-learning motivation dating back for the past forty years (Dornyei, 2003.). The socio-educational model posits that language-learning motivation comes from four main areas – context, anxiety, external influences and individual differences (Gardner, 2001). The majority of language motivation studies for the past 40 years have been conducted on the more commonly taught languages of English, Spanish, French and German (Taha, 2007) and these studies have had far-reaching implications for foreign and second language pedagogy (Ushioda, 2003). They have provided a wealth of information giving insight into what facilitates language learning. Using the results of these studies of affective variables and their effects on classroom activities, language teachers have been able to design classroom curricula that help students overcome
difficulties with language anxiety and with retention of basic language elements.

Motivation studies are a cornerstone in the field of pedagogical training of teachers of any language (Gardner, 2001.)

Statement of the Problem & the Research Gap

Very few research studies exist that address language motivation in the Arabic language classroom, language-learning motivation in minority student populations, or address specifically the population of veteran students enrolled in higher institutions of learning. The following study addresses the issues that motivate Iraq war veterans to study Arabic language and culture after their initial deployment to Iraq and identifies other affective variables that they bring to the context of the classroom. This investigation uses qualitative methodology to examine closely veterans’ linguistic and cultural exposure to Arabic and the role that their exposure assumes in their post-deployment academic decisions. Their previous exposure to Arabic language and culture is an affective factor in their decision to enroll in ALC coursework. The previous exposure also contributes to the affective variables that are part of the context they bring to the classroom. The most prominent affective variable addressed is language-learning motivation. As previously stated and as will be discussed, few studies exist in Arabic language learning motivation and there are no studies that focus on Iraq war veterans learning Arabic. With the growth of and emphasis on Arabic language education from a multitude of sources such as the US State Department and various intelligence agencies, this topic warrants further investigation.
In order to clarify the scope of this work, it is appropriate to define some terms that will be of use throughout the course of research. Affective variables refer to a number of issues that influence a language learner’s participation and continuation of learning a language. These variables take a variety of forms such as motivations to learn the language, students’ perceptions of the target language, their language anxiety, their attitudes and their beliefs about the target language and culture. The term intercultural interaction is used to describe the inevitable contact between individuals from different cultural backgrounds (Allport, 1954; Dornyei & Csizer, 2005). Intercultural contact and communication, as will be discussed further in the literature review section, is a strong motivating factor for some students to learn another language (Dornyei, 2005) and has become an increasing focus of study in the areas of foreign language education (Ryan, 2006). It has been observed that intercultural interactions have an influence on the attitudes and behaviors of students towards the target language and culture. These observations form the basis of Contact Hypothesis first postulated by Allport (1954). The present study examines one particular group of language learners, veteran students, and their intercultural interactions with Arabs in Iraq and in other Middle Eastern countries in order to describe their perceptions of their intercultural contact and the influence this contact has had on their Arabic language learning.

As was previously stated, many of the published studies on language motivation have focused on languages such as English, Spanish, French and German (Taha, 2007; Al-Batal, 2003; Elkhaifi, 2005). As motivation seems to have a direct correlation to the increase in demand for Arabic – so much so that according to the aforementioned MLA 2004 study Arabic is no longer considered a LCTL since it is the 10th most studied
language in the United States – it is vital to study motivation in students of Arabic within the pedagogical context as opposed to making broad, general assumptions regarding the growth of the interest in learning the Arabic language (Husseinali, 2006).

Furthermore, absent in many of the existing studies are accounts and qualitative detailed descriptions of students’ exposure to the language and culture prior to their classroom experience. These intercultural experiences, intercultural communications and contact, may contribute to their learning experiences (Dornyei, 2001). Current scholarship in the field of language learning motivation focuses on the intercultural interactions of students within the classroom environment, but most of these studies do not expand their scope to include students’ previous exposure to the target language and culture before ever entering the language classroom. A few studies have examined students’ intercultural interactions and their motivations after learning the target language in the classroom but do not account for the historical elements (Norton, 2000) that may contribute to their language learning motivations. Factors that exist prior to the student ever entering the classroom may contribute to language-learning motivation (Lambert, 2001). Prior experiences with the language and culture become operative affective variables within the classroom context. In order to give a more holistic picture of language-learning motivation, this research strives to explore veterans’ ALC learning motivations within the context of their prior intercultural experiences.

This study focuses on veteran students’ Arabic language and cultural (ALC) exposure before they entered the language classroom as part of their degree programs. It examines in depth the nature of their experiences and the relationship between their experiences, their current ALC learning motivation and other affective variables.
influencing their language learning that contribute to the context Iraq war veterans bring to the classroom. A notable aspect of former studies in Arabic language learning is that many lack data on individual student populations. The research participants are generally categorized as “Arabic language students” and no other data regarding the individual participants is provided. Little attention is given to their identities outside the language classroom even though those identities may contribute to the context that they bring to the classroom (Alosh, 1997). Husseinali’s Arabic language learning motivation studies in 2004 and 2006 further categorized students into heritage learners (students with cultural family ties to the language) and non-heritage learners (those with no cultural family ties to the language). These two studies focused on the general reasons that students were studying the language and emphasized the instrumental (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Dornyei, 2001) motivations for students to study the language. Instrumental motivation is a term used to describe students’ language learning goals. The study employed closed-ended survey questions in order to distinctly categorize the participants’ instrumental motivations so that a quantitative analysis is provided. However, even though both studies are thorough in quantitative detail, they did not allow for students to describe their language learning motivation in their own words.

Husseinali’s 2004 and 2006 research studies are also examples of important works that could not examine the intercultural interactions of the participants outside the classroom as a motivating factor for non-heritage students because of the specific foci. Exploring the possibility that the non-heritage students also had prior target language and culture exposure just as the heritage students had was outside the scope of his research.
However, both studies, which were conducted with closed-ended survey questions, were quite insightful about students’ instrumental motivations overall.

Also unaccounted for in many quantitative motivation studies in second language acquisition (SLA) are descriptions of the strong binding relationship between language and culture (Norton, 1997 & 2000). For example, in the Arabic language classroom, there is a strong relationship between the language and culture. The phrase “as-salaam-u-alaykum” is an Arabic greeting that has socio-religious cultural context. Learning about the cultural context of the phrase is as important as learning the phrase itself (Alosh, 1997; Al-Batal, 2003). In the beginning stages of learning, basic words and phrases have meaning only from cultural context. Cultural elements can act as motivating factors in language learning and may have an impact on students’ motivations (Omaggio, 1992) yet little attention is given to this relationship between language and culture.

Not only is motivation affected by learning cultural elements, but there is research that suggests proficiency in language learning is affected as well. The relationship between proficiency and motivation is well established (Samimy, 1994; Alosh, 1997, Dornyei, 2001; Noels, Pelletier, Clement, & Vellerand, 2003; Dornyei & Csizer, 2005). Students who learn a language in a vacuum, without cultural context, show limited proficiency (Omaggio, 1992; Alosh, 1997; Lantolf, 1999; Norton, 2000; Dornyei, 2001; Sato, 2002; al-Batal, 2003). However, because of the specific scope and methodology of many quantitative SLA studies in motivation, there is no qualitative description of the relationship between the target language and culture as they relate to student motivation. My study accounts for this relationship by interviewing participants regarding their learning of language and culture exposure. Because the study presumes
that there is a close relationship between language and cultural context (Norton, 1997 & 2000), the term Arabic language and culture (ALC) is used throughout this dissertation to refer to Arabic language classes, within which the Arabic cultural context is an organic part of language learning.

**Significance of the Study**

Research in the Arabic language classroom focusing on Veteran student populations does not yet exist in the literature as a whole, presenting a gap in academic pedagogical literature. By 2010, an estimated two million US military personnel will have an in-country cultural and linguistic experience in the Arabic speaking world lasting from six months to two years. Existing educational research can benefit from learning about this population as they make up a significant portion of minority students attending colleges and universities. Mettler (2005) postulates that after World War II, Veteran graduates entered the workforce upon completing their undergraduate education and changed the wage standard in the US by demanding higher pay due to their education. It is too soon to predict how this generation of veterans will reshape the direction of our society, but we can begin to examine the nature of the impact of veterans’ unique experiences in the foreign language classroom.

The scope of this study is in the specific area of veteran’s motivation to learn a language and culture to which they’ve been previously exposed. In some cases, the veterans’ exposure to the Arabic language and culture (ALC) is longer, more extensive, and more diverse than that of their Arabic teachers’. Little is known about their motivation to learn a language and culture to which they’ve already been exposed and
may not need for their educational goals. Saying that they are merely curious based on their previous experiences in the Middle East seems grossly insufficient given that some have had negative intercultural interactions and these interactions occurred in a context of conflict.

Contributing to the significance of the study is that Arabic is classified as one of the hardest languages for English speakers to learn (Al-Batal, 1995). Arabic is a category four language (Samimy, 1992), which refers to the time investment needed to learn the language. Generally, it can take an individual four times as long to learn Arabic as it can to learn a category one language such as Spanish. The length of time it takes to learn Arabic can discourage students from learning the language. One reason Arabic is categorized in this way is the diglossic nature of the language (Versteegh, 1997). There exists a broad spectrum of Arabic language usage from the Modern Standard Arabic language, most frequently taught in institutions of higher education, to the colloquial dialects (Alosh, 1997). For students, it can seem as if they must learn two languages in order to grasp the intricacies of communication. Arabic teachers need to understand student motivation in order to maintain their interest and battle the discouragement that they feel after several courses or months of diligent study with no significant improvement in their proficiency (Al-Batal, 1995).

As a federally recognized minority, veteran students’ inclusion in the classroom plays a vital role in creating a diverse environment. Finding ways to help them understand their military experiences within the context of the language classroom has innumerable benefits to the veteran, the teacher and the other students in the class. The most obvious benefit is the sharing of their positive cultural and linguistic interactions
with the class. Veterans do not usually need to be forced to share these experiences but at least the teacher, through understanding motivation, can create an atmosphere in the classroom conducive to such inclusion.

**Background and Significance of the U.S. G.I. Bill**

This section briefly describes, defines, and gives historical context to the U.S. G.I. Bill program. All nineteen participants in this study participated in the U.S. G.I. Bill to fund their college education. It is relevant to explain some background of the G.I. Bill because our veteran students use this program to pay for their Arabic language coursework as well as to supplement their income while attending college. Without it, many veterans would be unable to attend college or enroll in Arabic language and culture (ALC) courses. The G.I. program has made education accessible to lower-income and minority students for the last 50 years. Mettler (2005) posits that the G.I. Bill was one of the most transformative public programs in the history of the United States. There is still debate among scholars on the exact nature of the G.I. Bill’s contributions to the civic life of American males after World War II. One reason for the debate on the G.I. Bill’s role in the contribution of these veterans in civic society is due to the lack of concurrent educational research at the time of its implementation (Mettler, 2005 & Humes, 2006).

The term “G.I.” is an abbreviated term for ‘government issue’. Originally it was applied to items given to soldiers upon their enlistment such as clothing, toiletries and shoes, but eventually evolved to refer to a person serving in the armed forces. The G.I. Bill, or Montgomery G.I. Bill, refers to the education benefits offered to military personnel during active duty and after their military service contract has ended.
The G.I. Bill, introduced in 1944 and revised most recently in 2008, is one of the single most important factors of military recruitment (Department of Veteran’s Affairs, 2007). Veterans accounted for 49% of college admissions in 1947 (Mettler, 2005). Now, there are approximately sixty percent of veterans taking advantage of the G.I. Bill (Department of Veteran Affairs, 2007)\(^2\). They are a federally recognized minority and have significant experiences that they bring to the classroom. Little has been written about the veteran experience in higher education (Mettler, 2005), but their status as a minority and the significant financial investment made in them by the U.S. government in their education warrants further investigation into their experiences.

Post-Vietnam era veteran education saw 70% go on to use their benefits for a college education. Interestingly, we did not see the explosion in Vietnamese language learning post-deployment to Vietnam, as we have seen with Arabic post-deployment to Iraq. Comparatively, very few Vietnam veterans went on to study the Vietnamese language. It is unknown if the low enrollments of veterans in Vietnamese language coursework was due to low demand or low availability of language coursework. The current phenomenon with current Iraq war veteran students learning Arabic in college may be unique. Therefore, of particular interest in this research are those veterans who decide to learn Arabic language and culture after their deployment to the Middle East.

\(^2\) These are approximations. Exact enrollment numbers are not yet available from the Department of Defense or the Department of Veterans Affairs.
Purpose of the Study

Through the use of qualitative methodology, this study explores Iraq war veterans’ motivations to study Arabic language and culture (ALC) post-deployment, identifies other affective variables in their ALC learning, and describes their intercultural experiences in Iraq and how these experiences have influenced their language-learning, their perceptions of ALC and their educational goals. The research also documents their ALC exposure prior to their deployment, during their deployment to Iraq, and post-deployment.

The purpose of this study is multi-faceted. First, it identifies and describes elements that contribute to veterans’ ALC learning motivation. Language educators and curriculum developers who design and implement classroom activities can use these elements to improve effectiveness in meeting the needs of language learners. Knowing what motivates students helps foreign language (FL) educators identify how to motivate students. Second, this study will provide some insight into how previous language and culture exposure influences students’ academic decisions through the experiences of veteran students. As proposed by Norton (2000) and discussed further in Chapter 2, language-learning motivation is an affective variable that does not occur within the vacuum of the language classroom. Motivation may be temporal and can be influenced by other variables such as previous language and cultural exposure. Motivation can also influence other affective variables such as language anxiety (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Because motivation is difficult to measure and categorize, it is important to explore motivation within the entire language-learning context (Gardner, 2001 & Dornyei, 2001). In light of these interacting affective variables, this research study explores and describes
language motivation beyond the classroom context. Third, this study identifies other important factors relevant to veteran education that contribute to the ALC classroom context and environment. Fourth, it helps fill in the research gap currently existing in Arabic language pedagogy research. Finally, this study reveals larger issues of diversity, equity, and accessibility of education within the classroom context and within the four-year college educational model. These are important issues that have emerged as important not just from the data collected from my research. Issues of equity, diversity, and educational accessibility have proven to be increasingly vital to developing proficient Arabic linguists throughout the course of my professional and personal experience as a foreign language educator. These were also issues that influenced my decision to undertake this research project. With the increased enrollments of veterans in institutions of higher education, it is vital to uncover ways to accommodate this minority group of students. In the course of helping them, we could create a more diversity-friendly, inclusive classroom environment for all language students.

**Contributions**

This research project contributes to the field of language learning motivation studies in several areas including integrative and instrumental motivation (refer to Chapter 2), demotivation, and Allport’s (1954) Contact Hypothesis. It presents an examination of some motivating intercultural experiences, both negative and positive, that our military personnel have had with Arabic language and culture (ALC). This study also hopes to bring the Veteran’s voice to academic literature, a voice that has been largely absent in educational pedagogy.
Many veterans have been exposed to the target language and culture (ALC) in a conflict environment. Their motivation to study the language, as evidenced by their enrollment into ALC courses post-deployment, occurs despite their interactions within a context of conflict. As postulated by Allport (1954) in presenting his Contact Hypothesis, the type of contact between cultures can determine whether or not there is a positive or negative attitude change. He states that positive intercultural interactions results in positive attitude changes and negative intercultural interactions results in negative attitude changes. However, the veterans’ specific attitudes toward ALC have not been thoroughly explored. This paper explores the mechanisms of intercultural contact to enhance understanding of contact hypothesis.

As will be discussed further in the literature review, two primary classifications of motivation are described in the body of language motivation research (Gardner and Lambert, 1972; Dornyei, 1996; Dornyei; 2001, Lambert, 2001; Dornyei & Csizer, 2005). Integrative motivation focuses on the learner’s desire to integrate the target language and culture into one’s own identity through attitudes, behaviors and cultural practices. Instrumental motivation concerns itself with the language learner’s goals – for example, using the language to get a job or travel to the region. Of interest in this study is that many of these veterans exhibit elements of both instrumental and integrative motivation, but may not return to the region and have already had extensive intercultural contact, some have already left the military. Their motivation is difficult to classify wholly into one category or the other. They may be exhibiting elements of a new classification for language-learning motivation.
Methodology Overview

As stated, the study identifies, explores, and describes affective and motivational factors of Iraq war veterans and their attitudes towards ALC based on interviews discussing their intercultural experiences in Iraq. Veterans related their experiences before, during and after their deployments to Iraq that led them to study ALC. Language-learning motivation in students is difficult to quantify. Therefore, this research employed qualitative methods that include includes interviews, focus groups, an open-ended survey questionnaire and classroom observations in order to describe these intercultural experiences (Mackey & Gass, 2005; Dornyei, 2007; Webster & Mertova, 2007; Seidman, 2007; Creswell, 2009). There is a descriptive case-narrative for a sampling of the participants (Silverman, 2000 & Wolcott, 2001) who gave detailed account of his or her intercultural experiences with the target language and culture both inside and outside of the classroom. It describes how Arabic language-learning fits into their long-term educational goals, and then what we, as educators, can do to improve language-learning techniques to provide a better language classroom (Mackey & Gass, 2005).

As language teachers, we search for ways to bring our students’ voices to the classroom. When teaching a language such as Arabic, this is a difficult process. Through the use of narratives, language teachers can utilize veterans’ relevant experiences with the target language in the classroom. Such descriptive narratives are useful as a means for pedagogues and scholars to tap into relevant experiences to bring a context to language learning, not just for military students, but for all students.

In sum, this study documents motivation and other affective variables, and the intercultural experiences of Iraq war veterans learning Arabic language post-deployment.
It is significant, because there is a dearth of research in both Arabic language learning motivation and Veteran students in higher education. Their intercultural experiences have an influence on their academic decisions. They bring a diverse dynamic to the Arabic language classroom through the context of their personal experiences with the target language and culture. We should begin to tap into the nature of their language motivations in order to improve Arabic language pedagogy and Arabic language curricula and fill the research gap.

Research Questions

The three primary research questions guiding this study are 1) What motivates these Iraq war veterans to learn Arabic language and culture (ALC)?; 2) How do their intercultural experiences affect their attitudes towards Arabic language and culture (ALC)?; and 3) What are other affective variables in Iraq war veterans Arabic language and culture (ALC) learning?

The first research question focuses on the motivational variables detected in their interviews, focus group interviews, and questionnaires and as informed by current motivational research. The second is addressed through information on based upon veterans’ personal experiences and the cultural context in which the interactions occurred. And the final question is answered by identifying possible other affective variables that might influence their language and culture learning.

Traditionally, in qualitative research, additional questions will emerge as data is collected. As a qualitative study using case-narrative methodology, it is difficult to provide a solid hypothesis before the all the data are collected and analyzed. However,
the outcomes of a pilot study conducted in 2007 (see Chapter 3), suggested an interesting result; these veterans continue their language and culture studies because it helps them to make sense of their intercultural interactions that they experienced while deployed. It is suggested that academic endeavors act as a cathartic activity for dealing with very intense, perplexing, intercultural interactions that occurred in the past deployment. However, evaluating this suggested aspect of the data in detail is outside the scope of this study and moves into the realm of social psychology, an area that could use the data for further research. But the research questions are framed within the context of language learning motivation and the study concentrates on veterans’ education in language and culture.

Organization of the Dissertation

Chapter Two of this dissertation evaluates existing literature in the field of language learning motivation that informs this research. It describes some of the seminal works of Gardner and Lambert (1972), Norton (2000), and more contemporary studies by Zoltan Dornyei. It also provides a theoretical framework for motivation through the use of contact hypothesis, borrowed from Allport (1954) in social psychology. More specific studies conducted by Husseinali (2004 & 2006) are included to give perspective on existing research in the field of Arabic language learning motivation.

Chapter Three details the methodological procedures that were used to collect the data. The methods are modified from a preceding pilot study I conducted with a population of Iraq war veterans attending my Arabic language classes in 2007. There is a description of this pilot study as well as an explanation for using qualitative, narrative research methods in the collection of this data. Chapter Four describes the data collected
and analyzes it. Chapter Five draws conclusions based on the data analysis, states the pedagogical implications of the study, and makes recommendations for further research.

Finally there is a bibliographic reference and six appendices. The first appendix (Appendix A) is the participant consent form required by the Internal Review Board. The second appendix (Appendix B) is the veteran questionnaire. The third appendix (Appendix C) is an overview of the 19 participants in the study, including basic demographic information, their military branch of service, their previous language training, and level of proficiency in Arabic language. The fourth appendix (Appendix D) is a sample classroom observation log that was used a template for taking notes during classroom observations. The sixth and final appendix (Appendix E) is a template for field notes’ guidelines used during the focus group interviews.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The purpose of this study is to explore and describe veterans’ language and culture learning experiences to determine the dynamic that exists between their experiences after intense in-culture exposure to Arabic language and culture and their motivation to learn Arabic post-deployment. Research questions upon which this study is based are: 1) what are Iraq war veterans’ motivations to learn Arabic; 2) How do their intercultural experiences affect Iraq war veterans’ attitudes towards Arabic language and culture (ALC) learning; and 3) What are other affective variables in Iraq war veterans’ Arabic language and culture (ALC) learning?

It is difficult to use only one monolithic theoretical framework to research affective variables and motivation in language learning (Dornyei, 2003). The difficulty occurs because most of the data may not be directly observable or quantifiable (Creswell, 2009; Mackey & Gass, 2005; Norton, 2000; Wolcott, 2001; Glesne, 2006). Much of the existing data is collected from personal reports and students’ perceptions of their own learning and is highly individualized, which results in a paucity of consistent, measurable data describing the relationship between intercultural experiences and motivations to learn language. One theory alone cannot entirely account for the myriad of experiences that motivate learning. Therefore, it is necessary to draw from several theoretical
frameworks to set the academic context for research and data collection.

In the following literature review are descriptions of several theories that inform my research including Dornyei’s construct for language learning motivation (1994 & 1996), Gardner and Lambert’s language learning motivation theories (1972), Allport’s Contact Hypothesis (1954), Norton’s (2000) postulation on language learning and cultural identity. These theories operate within veterans’ intercultural experiences and their motivations to learn Arabic language and culture and were used to build an operational construct for the relationship between their language learning motivations, other affective variables in their language learning and their previous ALC exposure. Since motivation is an affective variable in the classroom and closely influences other affective variables, it is difficult to review the literature on motivation without discussing studies on other affective variables since many of these variables are so closely related. Therefore, the section of this chapter that discusses motivation also includes a review of relevant literature on affective variables. Also reviewed are studies focusing on language learning motivation and Arabic language teaching and learning. This study draws on the same theoretical frameworks to inform the research as the studies reviewed in this chapter. The studies included in this literature review were chosen because of their relevance to language-learning motivation and other affective variables and their research on the relationship between language and cultural learning.
A Construct for Language Learning Motivation

According to studies conducted by Clement, Dornyei and Noels (1994), measuring competence and language learning behavior integrates three main components; integrative motivation, linguistic self-confidence and appraisal of the classroom environment (Dornyei, 1996). Integrative motivation refers to the sociocultural dimension of language learning. It is discussed in detail below, but can be generally described as the language learners’ attitudes toward the speakers and culture of the target language. Linguistic self-confidence combines a variety of affective variables, the main components being language anxiety and language learners’ self-esteem within the target language environment. Appraisal refers to the learners’ attitudes and perceptions of the language classroom, the language teacher, and the classroom materials.

The Dornyei, Clement, and Noels (1994) research found that the classroom environment contributes to motivation in unique but measurable ways. They identified several aspects to the classroom environment affecting student motivation. Table 2.1 identifies and describes these elements of the classroom environment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Group Cohesion</td>
<td>• Rapport amongst students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Communities of practice (Lave &amp; Wenger, 1991) inside and outside the classroom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instructor Evaluation</td>
<td>• Students’ perceptions of teachers L2 knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Native vs. non-native teacher speakers (Braine, 1999)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Course Evaluation</td>
<td>• Relevance of course materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Students’ perception of course materials to their language learning goals</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.1: Factors of student appraisal in the classroom environment summarized from Clement, Dornyei, Noels (1994)
Their study found that even though instrumental motivation (i.e. driven by specific language achievement goals beyond the language classroom and explained further below) seemed to be operative within the participants of their study, integrative motivation seemed to be the most prominent variable motivating the students to learn. In a subsequent study, Dornyei (1996) reflected that it is possible that integrative motivation may be more prominent among students when there are short-term or situational goals within the language classroom environment, which would explain the lack of instrumental motivation contributing to the classroom context at any given time. However, Dornyei (1996) conceded that this is by no means a complete picture of the classroom environment and other variables may be present, immeasurable within this particular study:

“It has been pointed out several times in the second language literature that the difficulty of understanding the exact nature of classroom events lies to a large extent in the complexity of the classroom. In our attempt to find a scientific construct that would cover a large number of classroom phenomena, we applied a group dynamics-based approach.” (pg. 75)

As with Dornyei’s (1996) study, my research study must apply a group dynamics based approach when discussing motivation and the other possible affective variables that the participant veterans bring to the classroom environment. However, the data analysis section provides a detailed narrative approach to a cross-section of the individual veteran participants and their six case-narratives provide an overview of the veteran experience with respect to the linguistic and intercultural interactions in general. The emergent themes analysis is based on the data collected on all 19 participants and focuses on the commonalities of their experiences as they may contribute to their motivations to learn the language.
Dornyei (2005) further re-conceptualized his language learning motivation model in what he termed the L2 (second/target language) Motivational Self System. Figure 2.1 is a visual representation of this system or model.

![Figure 2.1: Dornyei’s (2005) L2 Motivational Self System](image)

This model attempts to account for motivational factors external to the classroom experience. In recognizing that motivation is complex, recursive, psychological process (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991), this model explains language-learning motivation within the context of the individual language learner. Understanding the L2 motivational self helps in accounting for the context that the individual brings to the classroom and what they contribute to the classroom environment.

The three dimensions of the L2 Motivational Self System as explained by Dornyei (2005) and represented in Figure 2.1 include the following:
• The ideal L2 self refers to the language learning and proficiency goals of the individual language learner. These goals may be integrative or instrumental in nature.

• The L2 “ought to” self refers to the smaller incremental achievement goals of the language learner. The “ought to” self includes completing homework assignments, classroom activities, and meeting course requirements. For example, an individual language learner knows that he or she “ought to” study vocabulary lists prior to taking a quiz or test so that they can improve their grade in the course. These smaller, incremental achievement goals are instrumental, not integrative, and are generally imposed upon the learner from an outside authority. The “ought to” self is more concerned with completion of the linguistic task than understanding the L2/target language and culture.

• The final dimension incorporates the language learner’s prior experiences and exposure to the language and culture before deciding to learn the language in the classroom. It may also include concurrent exposure to the language and culture while the student is taking coursework (Dornyei uses heritage language learners in his example).

Dornyei’s (2005) conceptualizations set a solid framework for my research because his three dimensions of the L2 motivational self system helps to describe Iraq war veterans’ language learning motivation.
Studies in Motivation and Other Affective Variables

As mentioned previously, affective variables in the language learning include psycho-social/emotive characteristics such as risk-taking, attitude, personality, self-esteem, motivation, and anxiety in the foreign language classroom (Samimy & Tabuse, 1992). These characteristics are common to the human experience and studies indicate that they have an impact on language learners inside and outside of the classroom. In a study of Japanese language learners by Samimy & Tabuse (1992), it was concluded that affective variables such as risk-taking and classroom discomfort had a negative impact on the students’ performance. There was also a negative change in the students’ motivation to learn the language over time:

“Because this study was longitudinal, changes in the students’ attitudes and motivation were observed chronologically. The overall deterioration of the students’ grades, attitudes and motivation is intriguing. A strong claim cannot be made that this was caused by the language learning per se, or by a more general decline of enthusiasm for studying among students during the spring quarter…Further research is needed.” (p. 393)

Examining veterans’ motivation qualitatively gives insight into motivational decline over time, if any.

Arabic, like Japanese and Chinese, is a non-cognate language with a different orthographic system from English. These languages are perceived as more difficult to learn for English speakers (Samimy & Tabuse, 1992). Veterans who choose to learn Arabic despite its difficulty are doing so based on their previous experiences. My research examined what those experiences were and explored why they would undertake such a difficult task after their deployment to the region. Because of the level of difficulty, motivation seems to be the most operative affective variable for my
dissertation research.

Motivation has been a cornerstone for second language learning and second language acquisition (SLA) research for many years. Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert (1972) conducted a series of studies exploring and describing why certain students learned foreign languages more easily than others. It sought to provide a more concrete picture of why some pupils had a predisposition or aptitude for learning foreign languages and others did not (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). The research design of these studies was based on social psychology techniques and measuring instruments applied to the field of SLA.

One of the greatest obstacles to researching topics such as motivation is the dynamic definition of the term itself. Yet, motivation seems to be a determining factor in students’ decisions to continue their language learning, not aptitude alone. Motivation in language learning moves beyond language teaching techniques and aptitude. As discussed by Gardner & Lambert (1972), motivation encompasses more in its construct than merely the way languages are taught to the learner and subsequent proficiency outcomes. This construct includes the learners’ individual differences (such as attitude, aptitude, effort, and anxiety), classroom context, and the socio-cultural milieu of the classroom.

It is difficult to box in the whole field of research in language learning motivation into a singular theoretical perspective because motivation concerns the complexity and multiplicity of human beings, their intentions, their behaviors and their intentions (Dornyei, 2003). Additionally, motivation is highly situational (Shedivy, 2004) and contextual, reflecting the humanity of research participants. As Syed (2001) argues:
“Increasingly, however, there is a growing concern that sociocultural and psychosocial factors have not been given due attention in motivation studies, so much so that there has been a call for re-examination of the prevailing research agenda (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991)… In short, there are many reasons why people learn languages, and these reasons are often related to one’s social, ethnic, and cultural place in the community at large. How we measure or document learner motivation has also been under discussion.” (p. 127)

Motivation has shown to be a topic that is popular in second language acquisition. According to Dornyei (2005), motivation is “one of the most thoroughly examined areas of second language acquisition.” (p.1). Its multiplicity, complexity, and highly contextual nature have made it difficult for researchers to provide one, monolithic definition of motivation. The definition generally depends on the context of the study (Spratt, 2002). However, there has been research that has categorized motivation in various contexts.

In an effort to give a clearer definition of motivation and its relationship to language learning, Gardner and Lambert (1972) identify two types of motivation: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. Integrative motivation describes a learner’s desire to integrate themselves into the target language and culture. Instrumental motivation refers to the goals of the learner to use their knowledge of the target language and culture in the future. More specifically, they state (1972):

“The notion of an integrative motive implies that success in mastering a second language depends on a particular orientation on the part of the learner, reflecting a willingness or a desire to be like representative members of the “other” language community, and to become associated, at least vicariously, with that other community” (p. 14)

Integrative motivation describes the learner’s desire to incorporate and integrate elements of the target language and culture, such as their behaviors, foods, and cultural
practices into their own lives. This type of motivation reaches beyond the classroom and reflects an attitude shift of the language learner towards the target language and culture. It indicates that the learner has become more accepting of the ‘otherness’ displayed by the target language and culture and is identifying with this otherness by incorporating it into the learner’s own identity (Norton, 2000). Dornyei et. al (2003) identifies another type of motivation:

“The contrasting form of orientation we did give attention to is referred to as an instrumental orientation toward the language-learning task, one characterized by a desire to gain social recognition or economic advantages through knowledge of a foreign language.” (p. 14).

Instrumental motivation describes and explores language learners’ ultimate goals with the language. As will be discussed below, a good example of research in instrumental motivation is Husseinali’s study in 2006 of Arabic language learners at a large land-grant university. He categorizes the goals of the students in his survey as a reflection of their instrumental motivations to learn the language and become proficient. The instrumental motivations classified in his study are defined into goals such as job acquisition in government, ease of travel to the region, and understanding of the Qur’an. The benefit of researching instrumental motivation is that it easily gives language teachers, curriculum developers and language programs clear insight into student needs. However, unlike integrative motivation, it does not necessarily help language

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1 Understanding the language of the Qur’an, or Koran, for many Arabic heritage speakers entails a detailed understanding of the grammar of Modern Standard Arabic. Arabic as a language has a complex relationship between the written and spoken forms that is beyond the scope of the discussion here but serves as a valid instrumental motivation for many heritage learners to learn the language in the classroom even when they speak Arabic in their family homes – it differs from the religious language of the Qur’an.
professionals in their search to keep students motivated from classroom to classroom.

Both categories of motivation are relevant to this dissertation study. The immersion of the Iraq war veterans participating in the study exposed them to both the target language and the culture for an extended period of time. Some may have had previous language and culture training as mandated by their military duties, but, as will be discussed further in the following section, they have had deep and affective cultural and linguistic experiences that can be strongly described as integrative. However, there may be a variety of influences that effected their decision to continue studying the language and culture after their initial exposure. Further examination of Gardner and Lambert’s work reveals that there may be other types of motivation that are difficult to classify. Students’ motivations and perceptions of their own learning change over time (Ely, 1986). Dornyei (2001) identified different motivational components listed in Table 2.2 that help to further refine the definition of motivation as well as to work towards a theory of motivation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Motivational Component</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Course-specific</td>
<td>Materials used, methodological framework, learning activities, testing and assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher-specific</td>
<td>Student-Teacher relationships, teacher feedback, teacher personality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Group-specific</td>
<td>Classroom structure, group orientations, rewards system, student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demotivation</td>
<td>Loss of interest, distraction, external factors that reduce motivational forces</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2.2 Motivational Components (Dornyei, 2001)

These motivational components are situational in nature and attempt to account
for the change in motivational levels of students over time. For example, student
motivation may be very high if there is a positive relationship with the teacher or if the
student enjoys the learning activities in a classroom. Dornyei pays special attention to
what he calls student ‘demotivation.’ Most research studies concentrate on factors that
are positive forces influencing student motivation but few examine and describe the
impact that negative experiences may have on language learning. Dornyei (2001)
describes demotivation in the following:

“Thus, a ‘demotivated’ learner is someone who was once motivated but has lost
his or her commitment/interest for some reason. Similarly to ‘demotivation’,
we can also speak of ‘demotives, which are the negative counterparts of
‘motives’: a motive increases and action tendency whereas a demotive decreases
it.” (p. 142)

My study will identify the types of motivation that are operative with these Iraq war
veterans, other affective variables in their language learning and the impact that these
affective factors and motivation have on their learning. Demotivation is discussed only
as it effects conspicuous changes in ALC learning.

Arabic Language Learning

Learning Arabic as a foreign language is considered a critical skill for many
undergraduate and graduate students at universities and colleges across the US which has
resulted in growth of Arabic language classes since September 11, 2001 and increasing
access to Arabic language learning through materials development and technology. The
number of students taking Arabic classes at US colleges and universities more than
doubled from 1998 to 2002 (Welles, 2004). Arabic is considered a critical language
according to the US State Department and we've seen Arabic translators, or 'linguists',
hired in record numbers in the past five years. The value of knowing the language and having a high level of communicative competence is apparent in the demand and salaries of Arabic linguist positions as well as in the large amounts of money that have been slated for Arabic language development at all levels of education in the US through congressional funding.

However, this growth in interest and offerings has not produced the high numbers of proficient language experts originally desired (Alosh, 1997). The disappointing results have its roots in a variety of reasons (Al-Batal, 1995), but one of the primary reasons considered in this study is that of student motivation. Students of Arabic spend years devoted to learning the Arabic language but have little satisfaction with their own results (Husseinali, 2006). This dissatisfaction in their own proficiency is reinforced by poor performances on proficiency tests (Dornyei, 2001; Spratt, Humphreys & Chan, 2002). As will be discussed below, this disparity between demand, interest and proficiency may be related to the type of motivation identified by Gardner and Lambert (1972) on behalf of the language learner. Those motivated to learn the language due to their instrumental motivation don’t reach high levels of proficiency (Gardner, Smythe, & Clement, 1979; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993). Studies have indicated that instrumental motivation doesn't seem to produce deep language understanding. Without seeing the results of their efforts, students don't continue.

However, those that have affective cultural experiences and identification with the target language and culture seem to be more successful language learners (Duda & Allison, 1989; Dornyei, 2001; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner & Berhaus, 2008; Dornyei & Csizer, 2005). In order to examine the relationship between this integrative
experience and language learning motivation, this study focuses on a population of students who have been immersed in the target language and culture - Iraq War veteran who have continued with their language and culture learning after their deployments to the region. Having a deeper understanding of these students’ experiences and the relationship these experiences have had on their increased motivation to learn, more, as teachers we can better design our classroom activities and materials to tap into the integrative nature of motivation of students studying Arabic. Improving classroom design to include integrative motivational tasks may increase the number of proficient speakers and successful language learners.

**Motivation, Affective Variables, and Arabic**

An extensive review of education literature did not uncover many studies focusing on Arabic language learning and teaching compared to studies in language such as French, Spanish, German, and ESL. Three studies that focus on adult learners of Arabic and how motivation affects their learning are discussed below. They empirically link the affects of motivation on language performance and proficiency.

An extensive study of adult Arabic language learners was conducted by Alosh (1997). He incorporated many facets to language learning and examined a variety of language learning strategies. His research found a correlation between the types of strategies used and language competence/performance. The research design was mixed methodology, which included surveys, questionnaires and periodic proficiency testing over a one-year period. In addition, the study followed these students on an in-country study abroad experience to Jordan. In an attempt to analyze student cultural context in
language learning, this study described students understanding of language functions. It did not focus on motivation but did reveal some evidence that poor performance lead to an effect on motivation. Alosh (1997) concluded that “slow progress and the inability to use the language functionally early in a course may have an adverse effect on motivation.” (p. 234). The study did not focus on language motivation specifically and no specific aspects of motivation are defined. However, motivation seemed to be an implicit part of the study that was omitted from the research, because it was an extraneous variable. The participants of the study were rewarded with a study abroad program to Jordan, which would suggest that instrumental motivational factors were at work in the classroom environment.

Elkhafaifi’s 2005 study of 233 adult language learners indicated that reducing the factors that lead to high levels of language anxiety in the Arabic classroom lead to improved listening comprehension in student performance. Elkhafaifi’s work examined only one type of affective variable, that of foreign language learning anxiety and gathered data on listening comprehension exclusively. Through the use of survey research methods and performance analyses, his study concluded that increased anxiety led to lower performance levels. When students had lower performance levels, their motivation to learn the language and improve their proficiency declined. His results support the work of Samimy and Tabuse’s (1992) study on language anxiety and motivation.

Another study that deserves attention here is Husseinali’s work (2006) at Yale with 120 adult learners who were taking Arabic classes at a variety of levels. Husseinali employed survey research methods and attempted to categorize integrated motivational concepts in order to understand the underlying motivation of Arabic language students.
The research subjects were divided into two categories: heritage language learners and other-learners. The heritage language learners consisted of students who came from an Arabic or Muslim family background. Other-learners did not have a connection to this background. The study’s theoretical frame drew from Gardner and Lambert’s (1972) initial work in motivation but included Dornyei’s (1994) more dynamic definition of motivational orientations. The purpose of the study was to identify student needs inside and outside the classroom. Husseinali (2006) aptly observed:

“Satisfying learner needs can lead to higher motivation as learners see their needs being fulfilled.” (p.398)

Also, it is relevant to mention that Husseinali found that learners’ orientations and initial motivation didn’t necessarily lead to better learning strategies and improved proficiency, but that:

“…they [the students] must perceive a personal value of what they are learning in relation to their L2 needs. Given the diversity of AFL learners and Arabic itself (i.e., Diglossia), practitioners will be better equipped to create a satisfying learning experience if they know their learners linguistic and communicative needs.”(p.398)

This motivational study included a very important aspect to language learning motivation that is largely ignored in many motivational studies – that of education goals. The language educational goals of students (sometimes in conflict with language program goals) relates strongly with learning motivation. Understanding those goals could help to develop better instrumental motivational techniques and activities in the language classroom. It also could inform curriculum developers on the types of materials that motivate students to learn.
The results of Husseinali’s (2006) study determined that the overwhelming majority of students believed that intercultural communication was the strongest motivating factor in their language learning. Again, this conclusion supported the Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954). It strongly suggested that students want to interact with Arabic language and culture within its own cultural context. Parts of this study do not apply to my dissertation research because the questions on the survey in Husseinali’s (2006) study were closed-ended and employed survey research methods. My dissertation research employed open-ended questions and qualitative research methods.

Contact Hypothesis

In Allport’s 1954 work entitled “The Nature of Prejudice,” there is an in-depth examination into the natural disposition of human beings to categorize groups in order to understand the world around them. The process of categorization is so systematized in human behavior that he postulates that it may be a part of human evolutionary psyche. It helps in forming group identities and communities of people, because it brings about such benefits as the growth of community spirit and increased safety and security. An inevitable result of this categorization process, as described by Allport, is that sets of ideas, beliefs and attitudes begin to form about those who do not fit into the communally defined category. The non-community members, sometimes referred in academic literature as the ‘other’, can then be subjected to prejudice that result in negative actions. Allport defines prejudiced actions towards this ‘other’ group, which reflect escalating antagonism resulting in violent expressions of prejudice. Table 2.3 summarizes these actions.
### Table 2.3 Degrees of Negative Action adopted from Allport (1954)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antilocution</td>
<td>Includes name-calling, verbally expressing antagonism towards members outside the communally defined category; mild antipathy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Avoidance</td>
<td>Reflects more intense prejudice towards those outside the group identity; physically avoid contact with the ‘other’ even in the face of inconvenience; no direct harm inflicted on the disliked group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>Actively participates in behavior that will harm the ‘other’; physically excludes members outside of the community via a variety of methods such as showing non-preference in housing and accommodations as well as restricting their educational/employment opportunities and their political rights; generally requires more than one member of the community in order to succeed; reflects and openly hostile attitude towards non-community members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Attack</td>
<td>Committing acts of physical violence directed towards non-community members; may be conducted by individuals or groups within the defined community towards individuals or groups outside of the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extermination</td>
<td>Examples include pogroms, massacres and genocide; violent expressions of prejudice</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Each action leads to further and more drastic (violent) antipathy towards non-community members. Antilocution, practiced widely and freely through discourse and expression, whether it be through the media or in the classroom, can lead to avoidance. In order to maximize avoidance, discrimination must be practiced. Discrimination necessitates more than one member of the group participate in prejudicial actions. Insecurities within the community that threaten its economic stability or safety causes attitudes and beliefs to escalate into more violent practices such as physical attacks. The
non-community members become scapegoats for the problems of the majority community. Violence towards the non-community group can lead to extermination. Allport draw on a number of examples of this behavior in history to illustrate the progressive negative actions.

Allport proposes what he calls the Group-Norm Theory of Prejudice that he defines as follows (1954):

“It holds that all groups…develop a way of living with characteristic codes and beliefs, standards and ‘enemies’ to suit their own adaptive needs. The theory holds also that “both gross and subtle pressures keep every individual member in line. The in-group’s preferences must be his preferences, its enemies his enemies.” (p. 35)

The “in-group’s preferences” can easily be manipulated by various individuals with political and religious agendas. The most prominent example is Hitler’s anti-Semitic propaganda campaign in German that led to the extermination of millions of German citizens during World War II.

Allport’s Group-Norm Theory of Prejudice demonstrates how belonging to any community or sharing a common identity with a large group may result in prejudice and negative outcomes. However, Allport also postulates that a very important aspect to human survival and human nature is the ability to adapt and evolve the group identity by including or expanding as a group. The inclusive nature of adaptation also goes through a process of re-integration. The most relevant aspect of re-integration of group identity to my study is reflected in his contact hypothesis.

Increased contact between the in-group members and the ‘other’ can change the attitudes and beliefs about the non-community group. The contact can take a variety of forms ranging from simple verbal interactions to business relations between groups. He
postulates that contact can break down the prejudicing process by challenging the beliefs
and attitudes of the in-group about the out-group (p. 39). He also implies that increased
contact eventually leads to inclusion, but does not define the extent to which this contact
must be made in order for the in-group to re-define themselves to include the non-
community members. Contact hypothesis describes a way to manage the contact
between cultures in order to improve relations between them, especially between
populations in conflict. Allport’s (1954) hypothesis postulated that intercultural contact
could change their attitudes towards one another. Depending on the type of contact and
the context of such contact, these attitudinal changes can move in a positive direction
over time. Even though contact doesn’t guarantee positive change, it does seem to affect
the attitudes and behaviors of the two populations have toward one another.

Motivation, Cultural Exposure & Contact Hypothesis

Using Allport’s Contact Hypothesis as a theoretical framework, recent
quantitative research conducted by Dornyei and Csizer (2005) surveyed Hungarian
students’ attitudes towards mainly German culture and language. The purpose of their
study was to measure the students’ attitudinal changes toward a variety of different
western languages and their motivation to learn those languages in the post-Soviet
context (after the fall of communist rule in Hungary in 1989). Figure 2.2 summarizes the
context of their study, which was pertinent to measuring student motivation and
attitudinal change.
Figure 2.2: Context of the Dornyei & Csizer (2005) study of Hungarian intercultural contact, language attitudes, and language-learning motivation

Their research followed the cusp of Hungary’s acceptance into the European Union in 2004, which dramatically increased tourism and travel to the country from countries such as Germany and France. They initially reported that there was a negative attitude change in Hungarian students’ towards Western European cultures and language based on their increased intercultural contact with tourists, which seemed to support other similar studies between foreign tourists in the region and increased intercultural contact. However, as pointed out in the review of their literature, “this simplistic rule may need to be qualified on several accounts.” (p. 335). In fact, their research, when they accounted for regional differences in the survey answers, showed that students from some areas showed positive attitude changes. They also showed an increased enrollment in foreign language classes in those regions. These regional differences seemed to better account
for more individual intercultural contact. Dornyei and Csizer postulated that the students could experience what is called ethnolinguistic vitality, or a way to explore the similarities and differences between collective group experiences (sociological) of a different language and culture and culture and individual experiences (social-psychological) of a different language and culture (Johnson, Giles, & Bourhis, 1983). They link this vitality to language motivation:

“In a recent study S. Lawson and Sachdev (2004) examined the relationship between multilingual behavior, ethnolinguistic vitality, contact, and identity and argued that the combination of vitality, contact, and language competence variables forms a ‘language resource base,’ which in turn plays a motivational role in influencing linguistic behaviors.” (p. 332)

So, the initial findings were further clarified after regional differences were accounted for. Increased contact in areas where students were able to establish ethnolinguistic vitality with the foreign language in culture effected an attitude change in the Hungarian students toward the language and culture. They became motivated to learn the languages of the tourists and foreign visitors to Hungary. Furthermore, their research, when examined closely, supported Allport’s Contact Hypothesis in that increased intercultural interactions affect a change in attitude.

In that national survey of Hungarian students conducted by Dornyei and Csizer (2005), students with increased intercultural interactions exhibited more positive attitudes towards the target culture, increased self-confidence in perceived language performance (even if the performance was not statistically better than those without the same level of self-confidence), lowered language performance anxiety and increased motivation to learn the language. The study was conducted as part of a larger national survey as post-cold-war Hungary’s economy opened up new avenues for business ventures and
increased exposure of Hungary’s population to foreign media. Hungary’s inclusion into the European Union became a major socio-political development affecting the population’s attitudes and perspectives on foreign cultures. As previously described, the study drew heavily upon the Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954). Dornyei and Csizer’s (2005) study supported the idea that person-to-person contact, as opposed to impersonal contact (such as through foreign media and generalizing information about particular cultures) had a deeper impact on the language attitudes of the population. The study indicated that in the smaller regions of Hungary, direct person-to-person with foreign tourists had a stronger influence in breaking Hungarian’s stereotypes and prejudices toward people from other countries. These smaller interactions, as they increased over time, changed the national attitudes as a whole. As stated in the Dornyei and Csizer (2005) study:

“These scholars argue that superficial contact experiences that are personally unimportant (i.e., that have no value in themselves and are not instrumental in reaching a valued goal) will not bring about significant improvement of intergroup relations.” (p. 353).

Building on the Dornyei and Csizer 2005 study, Kormos and Csizer (2007) studied Hungarian students of German and English. The study revealed that, even though exposure to authentic materials and tourists from the target language and culture did not necessary increase their overall proficiency in the languages, the perception of this cross-cultural contact alleviated their target language anxiety. The students perceived that this cross-cultural contact helped to improve their language competence and increased their motivation to learn. In another study conducted by Shedivy (2003) of students studying a foreign language two years beyond the basic high school requirement, she found that one
of the “sparks” that motivated students to learn Spanish was the desire to immerse themselves in the culture. Students who had experienced the language in their travels to Spanish speaking countries and had some communicative success showed increased motivation to learn the language upon their return. Thus Contact Hypothesis functions as a basic theoretical framework for a number of language motivation studies.

My dissertation study draws from Contact Hypothesis in that the participants, veterans, had extensive intercultural contact with the ‘other’ group, Arabs. In fact, they had been physically and mentally trained in their military experience to draw a distinct difference between themselves and Iraqis (Bell, 1986). Their intercultural contact took innumerable forms, all of which had a profound influence in their academic decisions as evidenced by increased veteran enrollment in Arabic language and culture (ALC) courses. Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954) plays a vital role in this dissertation research as it directly refers to two populations in direct conflict with one another, American military personnel and Iraqi nationals (the basis for Allport’s observations upon which he developed his Contact Hypothesis). Iraq veterans experienced their contact with Iraqi nationals in a variety of ways that influenced their motivation to learn the language and have further contact with the entire Arab world region.

**Language and Culture**

As suggested by Norton (2000), there is a close relationship between language learning and cultural context. In my study, I explored this relationship through the experiences of veterans. Language cannot be learned in a vacuum without cultural context. Setting this cultural context is the cultural identities of those involved in speech
acts (Norton, 2000). One of the conclusions of Norton’s study was that there is a close relationship between language, identity, and cultural context. Pennycook’s 1994 & 2001 work in adult ESL learners and World Englishes support Norton’s conclusion. The works of Norton and Pennycook emphasize that language and culture are inextricably linked, even though by textbook definition they are different terms. Language cannot be studied outside cultural context. When veteran students experienced Arabic language, they were also experiencing Arabic culture. Their motivations to learn about the language include learning about the culture. Therefore, in my study, it is difficult to separate Arabic language from Arabic culture. Following this idea, I refer to Arabic language learning as Arabic language and culture learning (ALC).

Norton’s study (2000) followed several adult immigrant learners of English in Canada. She examined journal entries made by participants. Central to her analysis were questions of gender, race, class and ethnicity. She investigated “how learners made sense of their experiences and to what extent their particular historical memories intersected with their investment in language learning.” (p.22). Norton described how immigrant language learners’ identities of themselves changed within the new society as their proficiency improved over time. Norton’s work was long-term, taking place over a period of two years. One conclusion of the many from her study is particularly relevant to my dissertation research. Based on their journal entries, interviews and questionnaires responses, Norton concluded that the participants brought their previous cultural and language experiences into the classroom through their memories and perceptions of those experiences. Their experiences gave them expectations of what a language course should provide, which influenced the students’ motivations in learning the language. This
conclusion is relevant to my study in that the Veteran students are also bringing their memories and perceptions of their intercultural experiences in the Middle East into the classroom. It remains to be examined how their intercultural experiences, perceptions, and expectations will effect their motivations for learning the language.

Also of relevance to my study is that Norton revealed a direct link between language learners’ experiences outside the language classroom and their motivation to learn. She distinguished between motivation and investment. Investment in her study is distinguishable from instrumental motivation (described and defined below) in the following way (2000):

“The concept of instrumental motivation presupposes a unitary, fixed and ahistorical language learner ... The notion of investment, on the other hand, conceives of the language learner as having a complex social history and multiple desires...that when language learners speak, they are not only exchanging information..., but they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world. Thus an investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner’s own identity...” (p. 11)

In my research study, it may be revealed that Iraq War veterans who learn Arabic also experience investment as did Norton’s (2000) participants. For the purposes of my research, however, this investment will be described within the context of motivation and other affective variables in the language and culture classroom.

Norton’s research has been used by many scholars as a springboard to develop qualitative research techniques to account for the contextual, historical, sociocultural and psychosocial factors in motivation research. The following are a selection of two relevant studies, which have used Norton’s (2000) framework for language and identity and which contribute thematically or methodologically to my dissertation research. Both
are concerned with language learning motivation and other affective variables in language learning.

Syed’s (2001) research on heritage Hindi learners used qualitative research methodology to explore student language learning motivation within the context of the Hindi culture to which they were exposed through familial connections. In an effort to explore motivation outside the proposed quantitatively biased models of Gardner and Lambert (1972), Syed’s study researched “patterns of thinking and belief” among the research participants about the language they were learning and the culture to which they had been previously exposed. Using qualitative methods according to Syed, helps to bring about a better understanding of contextual factors in motivation:

“There is a growing sense in the field that cultural, social, and contextual factors need to be considered if we are to get a clearer impression of motivation.” (p. 128)

His research, through case-study narrative analysis based on interviews and three broad interview questions, found that initially, the student participants reported academic and personal reasons for learning the language. However, there seemed to be something operative that indicated “more to it than academic transference.” (p. 135) More in-depth interviews revealed that the students had a love and appreciation for the culture. Similar to Norton’s notion of investment (2000) in language learning, Syed’s research participants had investment in their language learning through their love of the culture. Their investment went beyond just learning the language for the purposes of speaking with family members in their native tongue or fulfilling an academic requirement. The language and culture were inextricably linked so the love for the culture became a love for the language.
A quantitative study informed by Norton’s (2000) research is Ofra Inbar, Smadar Sonitsa-Schmidt and Elana Shohamy (2001). They surveyed over 1,600 elementary, middle, and high school students studying Arabic in Israel. The purpose of their study was to discover the different facets of motivation operative in the students Arabic language learning when a) they had a choice in whether or not to study Arabic and b) they were forced to study Arabic as part of their graduation requirements. The context of the study is quite relevant because learning the language of Arabic has particular social and political implications for many Israeli students. The political conflict between Palestinians and Israelis affects every aspect of life in Israel and Palestine. However, Arabic is also one of Israel’s national languages. Additionally, in 1996, the Israeli government implemented a language policy that made Arabic language study available in every public school system. Some schools required Arabic study and some did not. Inbar, Sonitsa-Schmidt, and Shohamy also point out that the students learn Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in school. They do not learn the Palestinian dialect. One of the limitations of this language policy implementation that they recognized as a significant affective variable in their study (which is difficult to account for) is that those using MSA in this context of conflict are presenting certain political and religious ideology. So, the Israeli students are learning a language many Palestinians associate (depending on their level and type of education) with Arab nationalism, Islamic-rooted zealotry, and the political elite. They do not learn a language that is necessarily meaningful and communicative for the learners and the speakers (Inbar, Sonitsa-Schmidt, and Shohamy, 2001; Alosh, 1997; Al-Batal, 2003), which in this context would be Palestinian dialect.
They admit that the teaching and learning of MSA in this context can exacerbate political and cultural issues by being political divisive.

The results of their research are of particular interest to my study because they found that whether or not the students were forced to study the language, the language-study itself caused an attitude and perspective change in the Israeli students toward Arabic language and culture. Also of interest is the role that Cultural motivation (desire to understand Arabic/Palestinian culture) played in combination with other factors:

“… the variables that significantly predict motivation to study Arabic in the future for all students in the pre-test are Cultural Motivation, Instrumental Motivation, whether the student currently studies Arabic or not, Parental Motivation, previous Arabic studies in elementary school, and Political Motivation. In the post-test, all motivational factors as well as current Arabic studies remain as significant predictors of further Arabic studies.” (p. 307)

They found that previous exposure to the language, in combination with other factors such as political and cultural motivations to study the language predicted whether or not a student a) continued their language studies and b) demonstrated an attitude change or perception change about Arabic language and culture. Additional findings concluded that motivation is a dynamic and unstable construct that is highly situational and historical (Norton, 2000). They also found that the way the language is taught also affects motivation for future Arabic study, which had pedagogical and teacher training implications. As with the veteran students in my study, the Israeli students were learning Arabic language and culture in a context of conflict. Their language studies (whether mandatory or not) brought about changes in their attitudes, perceptions and beliefs about Arabs. Their research, though quantitative, gives interesting insight into the relationship between learning a language, learning a culture, and cultural identity.
An extensive review of educational literature shows that various minority population studies are frequent inside and outside the field of motivational research. However, no major studies have been conducted on veterans. As a recognized minority within the United States according to Equal Opportunity Act, this is surprising. Coupled with this fact is that historically, the GI bill changed the face of our middle class in the United States after World War II (Mettler, 2005 & Humes, 2006). After the Korean War, approximately 72% of soldiers utilized their G.I. Bill benefits in order to get a college education (Kratznelson & Mettler, 2008). With their education, they were able to demand higher salaries and gain higher standing in the community. Also of note is the proposal that the G.I. Bill played a role in the civil rights movement of the 1960. African-Americans joined the military in record numbers between 1945 and 1953 seeing it as a way out of poverty (Kratznelson & Mettler, 2008). Upon their return, they utilized their education benefits. Through their education they were able to mobilize as a community and stand up for their rights as American citizens. Though the nature and role of their impact continues to be studied by American historical scholars and political scientists, it is apparent that the G.I. bill has a profound effect on the soldiers that take advantage of it, our education systems and our society as a whole. Given this profound affect, it is important to pay more attention to veteran students in higher education research.

As previously stated, the interest in Arabic language classes has grown significantly. With the exception of Husseinali’s 2006 study, most published studies do not differentiate between the types of students found in Arabic language classes even
though there seems to be focused attention on the varying contexts learners bring to the classroom (Alosh 1997). The Iraq veteran experience brings a unique intercultural experience to the Arabic language classroom that deserves attention. Examining their language learning motivations may add clarification to integrative and instrumental motivation and may help in understanding motivation and its psycho-social aspects in the foreign language classroom for all students. As indicated by Husseinali (2004 & 2006), Dornyei & Csizer (2002) as well as other studies, intercultural experiences have a direct effect on language classroom performance and ultimately in language proficiency in general. However, there is no in-depth study that describes the nature of veterans’ intercultural experiences and how they inform our understanding of motivation. This dissertation research described the nature of these experiences.

Summary

This literature review revealed that there is a gap in our research in Arabic language and culture learning motivation, in particular with the population of veteran students in higher education. Numerous studies mentioned have used survey research methods and qualitative methods to examine and describe students’ extra-curricular contexts, affective variables in language learning and language learning motivation in various other student populations and other languages besides Arabic. My dissertation project was inspired by my academic reading and teaching experiences in the Arabic language classroom. My research is informed by the theoretical works of Allport (1954) Contact Hypothesis, Dornyei’s (2004, 2001, & 2005) construct for language learning motivation, and Allistair Pennycook’s Critical Applied Linguistics (2001) as well as
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

What follows is an outline for a qualitative study of 19 Iraq war veteran students studying Arabic language and culture. In this study, several qualitative research techniques have been used to determine motivating factors and other affective factors as well as intercultural experiences of veterans studying Arabic language and culture after their deployment to the Middle East. Narrative data will be collected from the multiple participants in a variety of forms using research-informed and research based methods. Each participant was interviewed one to three times, observed in the classroom setting, and was given a questionnaire with open-ended questions. Each narrative draws from data collected through one-on-one and focus group interviews and the aforementioned questionnaire as well as my direct observations and field notes from those observations. This narrative method of inquiry recorded their perceptions of linguistic and cultural interactions while deployed as well as their perceptions of their learning, motivation to learn and intercultural interaction within the classroom. The collection process and analysis processes were conducted concurrently, because of the available issues and mobility of the participants. This aspect to my research is discussed further in the section that describes the research participants.
This section includes a summary of qualitative research strategies and characteristics of qualitative research in order to clarify why qualitative inquiry was chosen as the research design format for this study. A detailed description of the data collection procedures, the researcher’s role in the research, the recording processes, recruitment methods, and the description of the data analysis follows. I have also included a section that explains how the research format strengthens the internal validity of the study and a description of the pilot study that I conducted to explore the topic for possible dissertation research.

Qualitative Research in Education

My research project is heavily influenced by Creswell’s (2009) work with qualitative research design in the field of education as well as Norton’s (2000) work with immigrant language learners. Creswell’s work helped to set a template for designing this research study and Norton’s work supplies a model for the type and quality of data collecting instruments that would be needed to address the research questions proposed in chapter 1. Siedman’s (2006) work on designing interviews and the interview process influenced the shape and structure of the interviews and the open-ended questionnaire. Each qualitative method is described below along with an explanation of how they have helped to shape my dissertation research.

Also of influence has been Glesne’s (1992 & 2006) outline for qualitative researchers in education. She highlights the need for multiple methods of data collection for qualitative researchers. Her recommendations for these data collection techniques are interviews and focus groups followed up with questionnaires and participant observations.
As will be discussed further below, the research methodology employed multiple data collection techniques in order to strengthen the internal validity of the study as well as to triangulate the data.

*Qualitative Research Design*

Qualitative research, as opposed to quantitative research, seeks to describe phenomena to which it is difficult to assign numerical value. The characteristics of qualitative research can take innumerable forms, but Creswell (2009) describes several major identifiable attributes most commonly associated with qualitative research and analysis. Table 3.1 summarizes Creswell’s description.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participant Perspectives</td>
<td>Focuses on participant meaning in the issue or problem under investigation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergent Design</td>
<td>Research design will be modified as data is collected; difficult to postulate hypotheses before research is conducted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpretation</td>
<td>Data must be interpreted by the researcher; interpretation may be subjective, depending on the context of the research and the researcher</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theory</td>
<td>Researchers must account for the primary theoretical theories that set the context for their study and data analysis; Referred to by Creswell as a “theoretical lens”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiple Data Sources</td>
<td>Emergent nature and perspectives will demand that the data is collected from a variety of resources and a variety of ways in order to maintain integrity and validity of the study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Researcher Role</td>
<td>The researcher brings context to the design, theoretical perspective, history, data collection and analysis; the researcher must account for this context within the design and methodology of the research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Setting</td>
<td>Data is collected within the context of the participants’ experiences wherever and whenever possible; observations are made in the most realistic way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holistic</td>
<td>The complex nature of the data that is collected demands that multiple perspectives, diverse factors and a variety of factors be examined in the analysis of the data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: Characteristics of Qualitative Research (modified from Creswell, 2009)
Generally, qualitative research studies encompass more than one of the aforementioned characteristics in research. A good, but brief example of a qualitative study incorporating these characteristics is found in Norton’s (2000) study of immigrant language learners, the participants kept a journal of their language progress over time. These journal entries fulfilled a number of the above characteristics. The journals were written in a natural setting, i.e., within the context of the participants’ experiences. They described the participants’ perspectives on their own language learning. They were holistic in that they depicted the complexity of the human experience with regards to a variety of issues such as the immigrant language learner. Norton interviewed the participants numerous times over the course of six months to two years in order to gain multiple resources of data collection (which helped to maintain the internal validity of the study). The researcher role was well established through the description that Norton gave her own teaching experience and her role as an ESL teacher. Her study serves as a model for qualitative research with students of language and culture. Their accounts gave a holistic view of their experiences and Norton’s attention to her own role in the research developed an in-depth picture of the multiple issues and delicate classroom structure that makes up the whole of teaching and learning in the language classroom.

In addition to identifying these characteristics, Creswell (2009) stresses that strategies of inquiry should “focus on data collection, analysis, and writing, but they originate out of the disciplines and flow throughout the process of research” (p. 176). The emergent character of qualitative research makes it difficult to lock in only one strategy before some of the data has been collected. He recommends five possible methodologies that seem to capture the holistic nature of qualitative research: narrative
methodology, ethnography, phenomenology, case study and grounded theory. His recommendations are based on his observations that these five characteristics seem to be represented in a majority of qualitative research in the social sciences.

_A Qualitative Approach_

As will be discussed below, my dissertation will use narrative methodology drawn from multiple data sources (Glesne, 2006; Richards, 2001) in order to explain and describe the motivations of Iraq war veterans’ Arabic language and culture (ALC) learning as well as their intercultural experiences while stationed in Iraq. I decided to use this type of methodology based on Norton’s (2000) work because I wanted to explore in-depth the nature of these students’ experiences and their motivations as well as any other affective variables that became a part of their learning. Norton’s study provided rich data and a useful procedural model for my research study.

Qualitative research using narrative methodology has been used in studying language-learning motivation in the past. As is noted by Dornyei (2001 & 2007) and Richards (2001), closed-ended questionnaires that characterize quantitative and survey research can limit the researcher’s ability to collect data on motivation as a whole. Qualitative research does not necessarily reveal the dynamic nature of motivation from student to student (Norton, 2000). In my dissertation research, a targeted group of individuals were identified as a sample– Iraq War veterans learning ALC in the classroom post-deployment. They did not necessarily represent Arabic language learners as a whole, nor was their population representative of the majority of students learning Arabic. It was necessary to employ further qualitative, open-ended questions with follow
up interviews, focus groups, observations, and field notes in order to attain a deeper understanding of their motivation. The body of language learning motivation literature employs quantitative and qualitative methodology. In quantitative studies, the data does not reflect psychological aspects to language learning motivation. The closed-ended questions do not explore subjective data that surfaces in qualitative open-ended questions. Deeper understanding of students’ motivations may not be revealed in quantitative data.

Zoltan Dornei in his work (2001) states that:

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Qualitative/interpretive research appears to be particularly useful when researchers are interested in the structure of events rather than their overall distributions, and when the goal is to explore new linkages and causal relationships, external and internal influences, and internal priorities inherent in a particular social context. (p. 193-194)
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The goal of my research study is to describe and explore how the linguistic and cultural experiences of Iraq war veterans might be linked to their Arabic language learning motivation. Therefore, qualitative methods employing an open-ended questionnaire in conjunction with interviews, focus group interviews, observations and field notes constituted the most appropriate approaches to conduct this research.

**Data Collection**

As previously stated, multiple techniques were used to collect the data for this study. Multiple interviews were conducted with each of the 19 participants with a maximum of three for each veteran (Siedman, 2006). These interviews were generally between sixty minutes to ninety minutes. During the interviews, the veterans were asked open-ended questions and allowed to respond in as much or as little time required, as recommended by Glesne (2006):
“Interviewing is an occasion for close research-participant interaction. Qualitative research provides many opportunities to engage feelings because it is a distance-reducing experience.” (p. 105)

Nine of the 19 participants participated in one focus-group interview. Each focus group consisted of 3 participants and these participants had served in Iraq together. The experiences they shared as a group helped to enhance the detail of the experience, the perspectives they each brought to their exposure to the language and culture, and helped in triangulation of the data (Richards, 2009).

I observed each of the participants at least once in the classroom setting. Observing their intercultural interactions while they were stationed in Iraq was not possible, so it was necessary to find an alternative. Participant observation becomes a vital part to analyzing the data, because it helps the researcher “to understand the research setting, its participants, and their behavior.” (Glesne, 2006, p. 51). Indeed the observation and the accompanying field notes (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995) helped to gain an understanding of the variety of perspectives that emerged in the data analysis process (Spradley, 1979 & 1980).

The Researcher, the Participants, and the Research Setting

As has been discussed in previous chapters, historically, after World War II veterans made up a significant portion of the student population in institutions of higher education (Mettler, 2005). Statistics vary in Department of Veterans Affairs estimates of veteran enrollment in higher education today. The G.I. Bill has played a vital role in making college education accessible to minorities and economically challenged
populations within the United States. The onset of the Iraq conflict has contributed to an increase in war veterans’ enrollment in college, but the significance of this increased enrollment has yet to be researched and is outside the scope of my dissertation. I became interested in this increased enrollment of Iraq war veterans in my Arabic classes in November of 2005 when I began to notice an increase of older students, who I came to know as Iraq veterans in my basic level Arabic classes and Middle East studies classes. This number seemed to grow in the academic years that followed. Having taught Arabic at the college/university level since 1997, I was intrigued by the growing number of veterans choosing to take classes in ALC and Middle East Studies after their deployments to the region. Adding to my interest were several personal issues: 1) I have veterans in my own family (from various wars) who continued their education but did not take language courses based on where they were deployed, 2) I have always been an advocate for veterans because of my family experience, 3) My professional experience as a linguist has given me a heightened awareness of the relationship between language proficiency and quality of national security and intelligence, and 4) In my experience, issues of diversity and equity have a powerful impact on language classrooms (Norton, 2000) whether or not they are acknowledged by teachers and learners. My research idea grew from my background, personal experiences, and interaction with my veteran students. I conducted a pilot study (described later in this chapter) in order to determine the validity of my research idea and to explore the relationship of these veterans’ experiences to their ALC learning motivation.

At the outset, I expected to work with 25 participants, but after working with 35 potential participants, I selected 19 of them based on the quantity and quality of data and
how their data informed my research questions. Originally, there were seven participants in the pilot study. However, as veteran enrollment increased in ALC classes, I saw the opportunity to expand the pilot study into a dissertation research proposal. As veterans returned from Iraq and enrolled in ALC coursework, the convenience sample for the dissertation research study grew.

In this dissertation study, all 19 subjects ideally participated in two to three interviews, one focus group interview, and one classroom observation. They also filled out a questionnaire asking questions similar to the interview questions. Their participation in the focus group interview was optional for them because some were uncomfortable compromising their confidentiality as research participants.

A veteran is defined as any person who has served in the military. Veterans are subdivided further by the dates of their active military service and where they were deployed. Veterans are given the title of Iraq war veteran if they have served in any branch of the United States armed forces at any time during United States military engagement in Iraq and have actively participated in military operations involving Iraq. There are several locations where U.S. military personnel may be stationed, including Iraq, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, the Persian Gulf, Yemen, Tajikistan, Japan and Israel. This study focused on those participants who spent time in a country where Arabic is one of the official languages.

As shown in table 3.2 below, the participants came from all branches of the military and filled various job duty statuses. Their branch of military service and rank determined their job duties and the extent of contact with local Iraqis. As will be discussed further in chapter 4, the variety of service, rank, and status shown here led to a
wide variety of experiences among the participants regardless of their differences in ranch or military branch. All participants believed their deployments influenced their decisions to take ALC coursework and all underwent perspective changes relevant to this study.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Branch of Service</th>
<th>Branch Description and Responsibilities (types of duties)</th>
<th>Potential Duty Status Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>Provide air defense, use of air power to attain national security objectives</td>
<td>Reserves, Active Duty, Enlisted, Officer Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Army</td>
<td>Provide ground security and structure during and after combat situations</td>
<td>Reserves, Active Duty, Enlisted, Officer Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marine Corps</td>
<td>Ground air and sea support for other branches of the service (under the auspices of the Navy)</td>
<td>Reserves, Active Duty, Enlisted, Officer Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Guard</td>
<td>Ground air and sea support for other branches of the service (under the auspices of the Army)</td>
<td>Reserves, Active Duty, Enlisted, Officer Corps</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>Provide sea and coastal defense to attain national security objectives</td>
<td>Reserves, Active Duty, Enlisted, Officer Corps</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2: Military Classifications and Duty Status Descriptions by Branch of Service

Research Setting

This study focuses on a population of Iraq war veteran students studying Arabic language and culture and Middle East Studies at a large land-grant university, and a community college (that has a coordinated credit transfer program with the land-grant university), and other universities in the Midwest between the years 2006-2009. Many veterans take their language coursework requirement at a community college where the tuition is cheaper, then transfer their credits to the large land-grant university. Veterans save money by fulfilling as many requirements as possible at the community college.
before entering the large land-grant University. Therefore, both the community college and the large university were part of the research setting.

**Institutional Review Board (IRB)**

All 19 students are over the age of 18 years. Before their deployment, some may or may not have had any background in the Arabic language and some may have learned another language. Each completed some form of Arabic language training after their deployment. Each fulfilled at least one of the following criteria: (1) were currently enrolled in Arabic language and culture coursework or intended to enroll in Arabic language coursework, or (2) already had a career where some level of Arabic was required, and (3) all had at least one tour of duty (ranging from six months to two years depending on their branch of service) in Iraq, Bahrain, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, and the Persian Gulf. In exchange for their participation in the study, I offered each participant 5 hours of free Arabic language tutoring in lieu of direct monetary payment. No questions or topics discussed caused any psychological or emotional harm to any of the participants in the research.

I obtained written and verbal consent for all participants. This consent was in one of the following forms: (1) verbal consent (recorded in the interview process), (2) written consent via the consent form provided in Appendix A, (3) written consent via email communication.

**Pilot Study**

In 2007, I conducted a pilot study with seven veteran participants to explore their reasons for learning ALC after their deployment to the region. Participants for this study
came from two main sources (1) Iraq war veterans who took Arabic language and culture classes me and (2) veterans who were referred to me for participation in the study after IRB was obtained. The study held my interest for the following reasons:

- The participants in this pilot study mainly came from an Ohio-based Marine Corps reservist unit
- The unit suffered heavy casualties in company while they were in theatre (i.e., deployed to an active conflict region in Iraq), which implies possible negative intercultural interactions
- Many had chosen to take Arabic language coursework after their deployment and
- None had a clear idea that they would return to the region at that time

The pilot study employed qualitative methods in order to obtain the data. There were one-on-one interviews and small focus group interviews consisting of 2-3 participants at the same time who either served together or knew each other, one-large focus group interview at a pizza parlor that included everyone in the study and a follow-up written questionnaire. The questionnaire was sent out six months after the focus-group interviews were completed. The written questionnaire was used as a tool for data triangulation and it helped to determine if these participants’ linguistic and cultural interactions 1) perspectives changed over time, 2) changed because of the influence or presence of other veterans, 3) helped me to clarify what their military duties were while they were deployed.

1 Many have returned to Iraq through the military’s stop loss policy, which legally extends military contracts beyond their expiration date.
The pilot study found that the linguistic and cultural experiences that these veterans had while in Iraq had a deep impact on their motivation to learn the Arabic language. Many had used their spare time while in Iraq to start learning the language on their own. Both negative and positive intercultural interactions played a role in influencing their language learning motivation. All these participants kept ‘souvenirs’ of their experiences in Iraq that can best be described as material artifacts. The artifacts collected by these veterans all incorporated authentic Arabic language. The veterans all expressed a desire to understand the meaning of the language components of these artifacts. Further investigation showed that these artifacts held a significant symbolic significance to each veteran and was a motivating factor in their Arabic language and culture learning. For example, one veteran in the pilot study had collected a number of documents from an abandoned Iraqi government office. He spent many hours identifying letters that he knew of these documents. After learning the alphabet, he used the documents to practice his writing skills by copying the words on a separate sheet of paper. The documents motivated him to study the Arabic alphabet more thoroughly than the classroom assignments, even though he didn’t know what they meant. When asked about this activity, he said he wanted to see the Arabic alphabet the way Iraqis saw it. I was unaware if he had ever translated the documents in their entirety but the fact that the documents were used in his language learning could reveal motivating factors upon further investigation. However, textual analysis was not included in this larger dissertation research study because the research methodology required for document analysis is beyond the scope of this research study.
Participant Recruitment and Data Collection Procedures

For my dissertation, each research participant filled out a questionnaire (described below), participated in two to three one-on-one interviews (dependent on participant availability), were observed at least one time in their ALC classroom, and, as time permitted, participated in one focus-group interview. The individual interviews took place face-to-face and were recorded whenever possible, but, depending on the time availability and location of the participant, some interviews occurred over the phone or through email communication. Phone interviews are an acceptable form of one-on-one interviewing and sometimes may elicit more honest responses from participants since they will not pick up on facial clues and body language from the researcher (Seidman, 2006). I observed them in their language and culture classes at least one time during the course of the study and took field notes during observations. In the questionnaires and interviews, they were asked to elaborate on:

- intercultural experiences while stationed in Iraq,
- their language learning experiences while attending university language classes,
- their previous language learning experiences, and
- their motivations to learn Arabic.

Data collection from each individual participant began with a brief one-on-one interview, either face to face or over the phone. As Seidman (2006) points out that “the interaction between the data gatherers and the participants is inherent in the nature of interviewing.” (p. 22). Interviewing the participants one-on-one serves several functions, two described below. First, it helps the interviewer and the interviewee to construct meaning from the questions being asked. Having a mutual or common ground for this
meaning helps the participant to answer the questions as accurately as they can. Second, it helps to build a rapport between the researcher and the participant. Establishing rapport is necessary in order to get as much accurate data as possible. Participants can sometimes feel far removed from the research and even be suspicious (Seidman, 2006). Developing a relationship with the research participants serves to help the researcher understand the deep complexities of the participants experience (Mehra, 2001) and builds trust.

After an initial brief interview, the participants were given a research questionnaire. The research questionnaire in Appendix B was developed from the pilot study data collection process. Seidman (2006) suggests three 90 minute one-on-one interviews with research participants in order to maximize the amount of data collected as well as to maintain the reliability and validity of the data being collected. The researcher can look for consistency in the participants’ answers. However, in this research study, it was not always possible to conduct three complete 90-minute interviews due to the participants’ schedules and active military service. A number of the participants were stationed in Iraq. Having returned after one tour of duty, they had been ordered to return soon after the initial interview. I developed the questionnaire to accommodate participants that were overseas and could not complete three face-to-face or phone interviews. The questionnaire asked the same questions and elicited the same information as the questions from the one-on-one interviews. But it also allowed the participants to answer the questions without any undue influence from the researcher’s presence. It maintained consistency within the data collection.
Focus group interviews served a number of purposes the first of which was to bring these Veterans together so that they could interact with one another and not just with the researcher (Glesne, 2006; Norton, 2000; Spradley, 1980). Additionally, focus-groups allowed participants to reconstruct their experiences, not just remember them (Seidman, 2006). In reconstructing their experiences, they were more in tune to what was important to particular events (Seidman, 2006). The participants were better able to reconstruct their individual experiences when talking in a group as opposed to a one-on-one interview (Spradley, 1979; Creswell, 2009; Seidman, 2006; Silverman, 2000). However, given the limitations of the research subjects’ time and availability, it was difficult to require them to participate in the focus group. Therefore, the focus group interview was optional for the research participants. Field notes were taken throughout the one-on-one interviews and during the focus interviews.

Finally, I conducted at least one classroom observation for each participant. The observations will occur in ALC classrooms at a large university and a community college. The purpose of the classroom observations served to help validate the information and reports that the participants had provided in the aforementioned data collection methods. Since directly observing their intercultural interactions while they were in Iraq was not possible, classroom observation was the most practical way to incorporate this aspect to the data. Direct observation helps to strengthen the internal validity of the study as it helps to corroborate the participants’ self-reports (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998).
Limitations of the Study

As was observed from my experiences in teaching and from my pilot study, one potential problem with using this student population was that due to their military obligations, they were not always available for interviewing on a consistent basis. Many were called to active duty very suddenly. They had to withdraw from school and had to leave the state or even the country depending on their duties, military branch and unit. I made every attempt to stay in contact with them while they were not enrolled in school in order to maintain consistency in the data. However, some were limited in their communication abilities while deployed. I refer to the inconsistent nature of this population to their academic enrollment as the ‘transient nature’ of veteran students. This phrase seems to capture their inability, due to their military duties, to complete their education in a consistent, timely and consecutive fashion, but the phrase ‘transient nature’ is not intended have any negative connotation on their academic abilities. The transient nature of veteran students is determined by their military commitment, not by their commitment to their own education.

As a recognized minority in the United States, we make full accommodation for veteran students’ military commitments in the classroom and I observed this tradition in my research by accommodating their participation.

Recruitment

Research participants were recruited from the following sources:

- Arabic culture classes at a large land-grant university and a local community college that offers Arabic through a transfer program with the university
Middle East Studies classes at a large land-grant university and a local community
college that offers Arabic through a transfer program with the university

Arabic language classes from other colleges and universities within the United
States via participant referrals.

Most of the research subjects came from a large university and a local community
college where I teach ALC courses because the research pool is the most convenient
sample for recruitment. As noted by Max and Lynn (2003), convenience sampling is the
recommended way to reach participants in a new area of research. However, as the pilot
study progressed, I was contacted by a number of veterans attending classes at other
universities across the country who expressed interest in participating in this research. As
previously mentioned, some of the participants have began their academic endeavors at
community colleges and transferred to other universities as their military commitment
has required them to relocate to other areas. A wider pool of participants allowed for
richer and more thorough data.

Participant Confidentiality

All participants in this study remained completely anonymous in the write-up of
the research. They were given pseudonyms in order to protect their identities. Their
personal information was kept confidential and all data is locked in a secured filing
cabinet. Their identities remain confidential. Every attempt was made in the narrative to
remove their names and any information that may reveal their identity. This is especially
important for participants who are continuing to serve in positions of military intelligence
so that they will not suffer any possible negative consequences for participating in this
research.
Data Collection Process

I conducted each interview and monitored each focus group. Participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire (see Appendix B) that asked the same information that was discussed in the interviews and included demographic information such as gender, dates of service, branch of the military and previous language training. Participants were solicited from Arabic language and culture classes and Middle East Studies classes at a large University, a community college and from other universities across the country in order to attain a broad perspective of the linguistic and cultural experiences that veterans encounter in the classroom environment and to determine if these experiences in the classroom-setting affect their motivation.

As previously stated, there was an initial interview of each participant followed approximately one month later by another interview in which any additional information that may have been omitted in the first interview. The second longer interview incorporated information and discussion based on their answers from the questionnaire (Siedman, 2006). A third interview was scheduled several months later, but not all the veterans were able to participate. Participants were sent the questionnaire and consent form (Appendices A and B) once contact had been and initial confirmation of their interest in participating in the study was established. After the initial interviews were conducted, whenever possible, arrangements will be made to observe them in their language and culture classes one time when possible in order to corroborate their perceptions of their intercultural interactions in the target language and culture (Spradley, 1979; Glesne, 2006). Whatever observations were collected served to strengthen the internal validity of the study (Glesne, 2006). Field notes were on all classroom
observations (Wolcott, 2001). Appendix E is a sample classroom observation log that
served as a template for the notes that were taken during the observations (Spradley,
1980). There were small focus group interviews nearing the end of the data collection
procedure. All interviews and focus-groups were digitally recorded and notes were take
during the interview (see Appendix E).

**Data Collection Timeline**

Table 3.3 shows a time line for data collection, data analysis, and dissertation write-up.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximate Dates</th>
<th>Research Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>April – June 2009</td>
<td>IRB attained, Participants solicited and contacted, consent forms sent, appointments made for interviews and focus groups, questionnaires sent out, begin conducting interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June – September 2009</td>
<td>Conduct interviews, transcribe interviews, begin data analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October - November 2009</td>
<td>Data Analysis, beginning writing conclusion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November - December 2009</td>
<td>Complete analysis and conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.3: Timeline for Data Collection

The remaining months of April and May 2009 were devoted to collecting the
research data and contacting possible participants. Some participants were re-deployed to
Iraq and were contacted via internet through email and a social-networking site called
Facebook. They were interviewed via telephone, online chat, and email. April 2009
through September 2009 was devoted to collecting the data, conducting the interviews,
and transcribing interviews. November 2009 concluded the data analysis and December 2009 was devoted to writing up the data analysis and the conclusions.

Research Questionnaire

Appendix B is the research questionnaire used in the study as it was developed from the pilot study. It evolved over time to include questions that arose from data that was collected in the first few interviews from the pilot study. The questionnaire contains the same guiding questions as the one-on-one interview questions. As previously mentioned, since some follow-up interviews were not possible and due to the limitation of participant availability, the three 90-minute interview model as suggested by Seidman (2006) was not possible, so the questionnaire helped to strengthen the validity of the study. The participants read the questionnaire to help them reconstruct their intercultural experiences for the one-on-one interviews as well as the focus group interviews. The questionnaire gave them the opportunity to answer the questions without any possible outside influences that might have occurred during the interviews. They had the option of filling out the questionnaire in advance of the longer second interview or submitting the questionnaire after all interviews were concluded.

The questions that appear on the questionnaire are described below.

Question 1: Where were you stationed in Iraq?

This question is included in order to elicit information regarding the participants’ locations with respect to the ongoing military occupation in Iraq. Their location determined a number of aspects to their intercultural experience such as the dialect they heard and the security of the region (which in turn determines the duration and extent of
their interaction with Iraqi nationals). Although some participants were not be able to reveal this information for security reasons, most were forthcoming and the question is general enough that it didn’t compromise the participants’ confidentiality.

**Question 2: Did you use or learn any Arabic in Iraq? In what way did you use the language?**

In order to understand the extent of their intercultural experiences, this question is purposefully vague and general. It seemed to trigger some respondents to further clarify their Arabic language experience as they would differentiate between pre-deployment training and what they used while in Iraq. It also lead the participants into relating intercultural experiences where the language barrier seemed to cause problems in communication. The question is designed to maximize the amount of qualitative data.

**Question 3: What were your responsibilities when you were stationed in Iraq?**

This question is very important in examining and analyzing intercultural experiences. The duties assigned to these soldiers were usually very well defined and predetermined based on skill, training, and aptitude. Their duties also determined the amount of time and the nature in which they interacted with Iraqi nationals. Some had limited contact and some extensive. However, again, as in the first question, no data that would reveal their identity or that was classified was reported. By asking about their responsibilities instead of asking about their official job titles, I was able to evaluate a richer data set.

**Question 4: Did you have any previous Arabic language or Arab culture training before you were deployed?**
This is another question that is purposefully open ended. The question not only triangulates some of the data provided in the interviews and focus-groups, but also elicited some of the intercultural context that they brought to their military experience. Some may have had no knowledge of the language and culture of the region, some may have received training while in the military and some may have taught themselves some words and phrases in preparation for going.

*Question 5: How difficult was the language barrier to accomplishing your daily tasks in Iraq?*

This question posed some difficulties because the answers were completely dependent on the discretion of the respondents’ perspectives and interpretation. The veterans may not have perceived difficulties in the language barrier that existed in reality. However, this study is focused on the veterans’ motivation and it was appropriate to collect data on their own perspectives as it gave them a voice in this research. This question also elicited data on their perspectives and perspective changes about ALC and their motivations for learning ALC after their deployments.

*Question 6: Are you taking Arabic now and if so, why?*

This question encompasses the bulk of the data for this study. It is a direct, open ended question that elicits information with regard to their ALC learning motivation. The previous questions helped in leading them to consider their intercultural experiences as a precursor to their language studies. It also opened up a broad topic for discussion of the language and their experiences inside and outside the classroom.
Data Analysis Overview

Figure 3.1 illustrates how the data was analyzed based on the all the forms of data collected. The narrative analysis used information gathered from each of the three interviews conducted with the 19 veteran participants, the questionnaire, the transcripts of the interviews, and field notes taken during the interviews and during classroom observations. After careful examination of all 19 participants’ data, six selected participant profiles are included in the data analysis chapter based on the quality and richness of the data they provided and how that data best inform the research questions. The rest of the nineteen participants’ data is reflected in the emergent themes section. The themes are used to analyze the impact their intercultural experiences have had on their language learning motivation and their post-deployment educational choices.
Figure 3.1: Data Analysis Overview
Detail of the Data Analysis

The data collected for my dissertation came from multiple sources in order to develop a holistic narrative account of Iraq war veterans’ motivations, intercultural experiences and affective variables in their Arabic language and culture (ALC) learning. Table 3.4 outlines the process of data analysis that emerged as the data was collected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data Analysis Stage</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Data Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stage One</td>
<td>Transcriptions: transcribed data from oral / aural to text</td>
<td>One-on-one interviews; focus group interviews; notes from interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage Two</td>
<td>Analyzed of intercultural interactions in the classroom</td>
<td>Field notes from classroom observations; notes from interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage Three</td>
<td>Developed narratives for each participant</td>
<td>All interviews for each participant; interview transcripts; questionnaire answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage Four</td>
<td>Identified emergent themes</td>
<td>Participant narratives and all other sources of data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4: Data Analysis Detail

I analyzed the data I collected from these veterans in a four-stage process. As is characteristic of qualitative analysis, the nature of this analysis was difficult to predict before the data was collected, so planning a structured data analysis procedure was not possible prior to data collection. After researching different qualitative methodologies, I found that developing a case-narrative approach for each participant, drawing on their interviews, questionnaires, and observations worked best. The narratives revealed commonalities amongst all the participants that directly pertained to the original research
questions. The narratives also revealed emergent themes and gave the veterans an opportunity to represent their opinions and perspectives in data. As observed by Wilson (1996), analyzing interview and questionnaire data through structured analysis may not yield the best results. Wilson states (1996):

> The attempt to study attitudes, beliefs, and perceptions of respondents using artificial, unnaturalistic procedures is held to entail an unacceptably high degree of reactivity, no matter how well it is done…the respondent [who] may well feel that his or her ‘real’ opinion have not been correctly represented. (p. 112)

For this reason, these stages developed from guiding principles as I was collecting the data rather than set up prior to the data collection process.

Stage one involved transcription of the one-on-one interviews and focus group interviews. Transcription served to organize data collected from unstructured or semi-structured interviews (Weiss, 1994; Bolton & Hammersley, 1998). Transcription also helped me to familiarize myself with a complex set of data before I began the more in-depth analysis (Creswell, 2009; Bolton & Hammersley, 1998; Fontana & Frey, 2000). It helped me to identify any discrepancies between the participants’ individual reports of their experiences and focus group interviews. Being familiar with the interview and focus group data helped in the coding of the data. Coding, as defined by Creswell (2009) is “the process of organizing the material into chunks or segments of text before bringing meaning to the information (Rossman & Rallis, 1998. p. 171)” (p. 186). Coding played an important role in the following stages of analysis, which included case narratives and emergent themes identification.

Stage Two consisted of field notes analysis I had collected when observing the participants’ classroom interactions, notes from interviews, and focus-group interviews.
Since directly observing their intercultural interactions in Iraq was not possible and because this study has focused on their language/culture learning post-deployment within the classroom environment, it was necessary to use these observations in order to compare them to the participants’ reports of their language learning, their intercultural interactions, and their perceptions. These direct observations helped strengthen the internal validity of the study through member checking. Also, as a professional teacher, I wanted to see how these research participants interacted in the classroom, because their interactions are an important aspect to the language learning motivation process.

Stage Three incorporated all the data from interviews, field notes, focus-group interviews, and interview transcripts in to develop a narrative for each of the 19 participants. Each narrative describes the individual’s previous language training and experiences with ALC prior to their deployment, their most memorable intercultural experiences while deployed, and their post-deployment ALC learning experiences. Within the narratives, the participants describe their perspectives on ALC, language learning histories, their cultural understandings and misunderstandings, the contexts they bring into the language classroom, their language learning motivations, and other affective variables that are operative in their language learning. Care was taken to ensure that the narrative reflected the veterans’ own words in answering the questions. Portions from their interview transcripts were used in the narratives in order to support the data provided.

Stage Four of the analysis drew on all the data collected and the narratives to identify themes that emerged from the data. The emergent themes reflect commonalities that appeared in the narratives of all 19 participants. They are significant because they
reflect the common context that the participants bring to the classroom. These themes were further analyzed and categorized for their substance as well as for their affect on the participants’ language learning motivations in the Arabic language classroom (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998).

Triangulation of the Data

Every attempt was made to triangulate the data through multiple interviews as well as focus group interviews (Glesne, 2006; Richards, 2001; Dornyei, 2007; Creswell, 2009). The interviews, focus groups, the questionnaire and direct observation helped in member checking. The data was examined for consistency and any discrepancies warranting further examination (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A large portion of this data was subjective, based on the participants’ perceptions of their intercultural experiences (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, & Zilber, 1998). Some of the veterans’ perceptions changed over time (Norton, 2000). The questionnaire served as a baseline for measuring the consistency of individual veteran responses against their interviews. Transcripts of the interviews provided an additional resource to measure the consistency of the veteran responses. By comparing the questionnaire and the interview transcripts, I was able to write a case narrative for each participant that as accurately as possible reflected their intercultural experiences, their linguistic experiences, their perspective changes, and the influences in their language learning. In order to provide a representative sampling of the individual participants, chapter 4 includes a qualitative case-narrative description of six participants whose narratives corroborate the data from all 19 participants. The selected narratives also represent the perceptions of the intercultural interactions that influenced
all the participants’ ALC learning and identified other affective variables in their learning process.

Role of the Researcher

Finally, it is important to mention the role of the researcher in qualitative data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2009). An important aspect of this study is that half of the participants come from a convenience sample of my own students in the ALC classroom. They may have been familiar with my ideas, perceptions, and beliefs about language learning and have structured their answers that reflect my own opinions and beliefs. However, the role of the researcher in this data collection and analysis is made negligible by the following. First, the participants were given the opportunity to answer questions without my presence on the questionnaire and their participation in the study was not linked to any classroom performance or activity. Second, even though a language teacher can have a significant impact on student language learning motivation in a classroom, the researcher’s role is more detached and less influential. And, finally, significant commonalities were found among all participants whether or not they were my students.

As a teacher, I would like to mention that I have taught Arabic language and Middle East studies for eight to ten years at various institutions large and small. I’ve had the experience of learning ALC as an outsider and I’ve also had many intercultural interactions with Arab people from all over the Arab world. Even though I’ve not been to Iraq, I’ve been to a number of other Arabic-speaking countries, including Egypt, Morocco, Lebanon, Jordan, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Syria, Bahrain, Oman,
Saudi Arabia, and Israel. I’ve had similar Arabic language learning experiences as many of these veterans.

Additionally, I felt some personal investment in my research due to the number of war veterans in my own family. Even though I’ve never served in the military, I do have some pre-conceived ideas of what military service entails along with all the perks and consequences. As an outsider to the military, but with some insider knowledge, I’ve separated myself from the emotional and time investment to the military experienced by these veteran participants, while at the same time, I understand their perspective. This unique perspective helped me to better identify and develop their narratives.

Summary

This dissertation study employed the characteristics of qualitative research in order to collect data from Iraq war veterans in ALC classes at a large-land grant university and a community college as well as other universities. The use of case-narrative methodology helped to enrich, triangulate and maintain the internal validity of the data collected from the participants. The data sources described above included interviews, focus-group interviews, one open-ended questionnaire, and classroom observations. The purpose of collecting data in this way was to explore and describe veterans’ perceptions of their intercultural interactions before, during and after their deployment to Iraq as well as in their ALC classes. They drew upon these experiences to talk about the influences on their ALC learning motivations and other affective variables in their language learning. The data were analyzed to look for patterns and trends in the types of intercultural interactions that these veterans had and the relationship between their experiences and their motivations to learn ALC post-deployment.
CHAPTER 4  
ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Following is a detailed description and an analysis of the data that was collected for this dissertation research. In order to help organize the data presentation, this discussion is organized into five sections: 1) 19 participant descriptions; 2) six case narratives as a representative sampling of the participants; 3) emergent themes as they relate to the veterans’ linguistic and intercultural experiences; 4) Major motivations for language study and current motivation theory as well as a discussion of other affective variables in their language learning in the educational context of these veterans; and 5) summary.

Analysis of the data occurred throughout the data collection process. Narrative analysis procedures (Creswell, 2005) were employed in order to present a clear picture of the overall veteran experience before, during, and after their deployment while maintaining focus on their intercultural and linguistic experiences. Figure 4.1 gives a visual representation of how the narrative analysis and intercultural emergent themes informed the research questions. As was described in chapter three, the narrative analysis included data collected from each interview (three maximum for each participant), field notes from classroom observations, notes taken during the interview process, and transcriptions of each interview. The interviews were conducted before and after the
collection of written questionnaires in order to maintain consistency and validity within the data collected. Field notes were also used to help ensure that the information given was accurate and consistent. All recorded interviews were transcribed verbatim and field notes were organized according to the questions provided on the questionnaire. A cross-case analysis was reviewed in order to find patterns and themes of intercultural experiences and to look for commonalities or differences in language learning motivation. Other affective variables such as perspectives and beliefs about Arabic language and culture (ALC) in the language learning process and how these perspectives and beliefs have changed over time were documented. Each interview narrative, with all the components described above, was examined for emergent intercultural themes to determine the types of intercultural experiences that these Iraq war veterans had in common. The data were analyzed to determine the relationship between the veterans’ ALC experiences in Iraq and their ALC learning motivation post-deployment. Detailed descriptions of the themes that emerge from the participants’ narratives are provided as evidence in the language learning motivation process.
The fourth section of this chapter focuses on the language learning motivators identified in the data analysis. Described are the major motivators operative with the veterans in this study and the specific data points that support the veterans’ motivations for learning ALC. There is also a discussion of other affective variables identified from within the data analysis. These major motivators and other affective variables were apparent commonalities in the themes that emerged from the case-narratives. The fifth and final section of chapter four summarizes the results of all the data collected and the recapitulates the data analysis.
Overview of the Participants

All nineteen veterans who participated in interviews and answered questionnaires for this study served in the military during the Iraq war and studied Arabic after deployment. Each has a unique history with respect to the dates of their deployments, their job duties and their intercultural experiences. Their titles and job classifications varied depending upon which branch of the service they served and their rank within the military. Each classification determined the jobs and types of interactions that each participant had during their deployment. For confidentiality purposes, any specific details of a participants’ rank have been left out and a general description of the rank is provided in the appendix, with no specific names given.

Of the nineteen participants, three served two or more tours of duty in a Middle Eastern country and six participants served two tours of duty specifically in Iraq. Three participants served elsewhere in the Arabic speaking world in addition to Iraq and two participants served in Afghanistan as well as Iraq. All participants filled out a questionnaire (see Appendix B) before their interview in order to maintain the internal validity of the study.

As was previously discussed, the six profiles below represent just a cross-section of the research participants. They are meant to provide a survey of the types of intercultural interactions experienced by many veterans who serve in Iraq. The profiles also offer a picture of language and cultural training and the variety of exposure to ALC that soldiers have prior to deployments to Iraq.

Table 4.1 (page 90) displays data points that will be used as references in later conclusions. Included in the table are participants’ branch of service, gender,
language experience, jobs during deployment, level of Arabic studied and their foreseeable uses of language experiences and training. Of these categories, participant gender and ethnicity have significant bearing on the types of intercultural experiences in a gender-segregated society such as Iraq. Rank and active duty status may not yield specific conclusions at this time due to the smaller scope of the qualitative study but may become relevant if this study is expanded to include larger number of participants. Jobs during deployment and experiences with ALC previous to and during deployment are notable factors in their motivation. The final column indicates if the participant plans to use Arabic in a future career, which is a salient point in a study of affective variables and motivation. Appendix C provides an overview for all 19 participants in the study.

Each interview was transcribed in its entirety as part of the data analysis in the study. Portions of transcribed participant interviews are quoted throughout the data analysis in order to support and demonstrate the relationships between their intercultural experiences and the affective variables in their language learning, and to include the veterans’ voice in this research. However, the quotations have been paraphrased in some areas and edited for interlocutory events in order to facilitate understanding. Some participants did not wish to have any of their transcriptions appear as quotations in this document in order to protect their confidentiality.

**19 Participant Profiles**

Participant profiles were developed from the narrative case analyses of each participant as one way to represent the qualitative data gathered for this study. The profiles are a brief overview of each Veteran research subject and include their
pseudonym, military branch, gender, prior language-learning experiences, job description during deployment, their level of Arabic completed at the time of the last interview, and if they expressed interest in using ALC in their future careers. Table 4.1 gives an overview of the 19 participants in the study. (Refer to Appendix C for more demographic detail on each participant).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Military Branch</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Pre-deployment language experience (Y/N)</th>
<th>Job Description during Deployment</th>
<th>Level of Arabic Studied – Informal (0), Beginner (B), Intermediate (I), Advanced (A)</th>
<th>Future ALC Use? (Y/N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alissa</td>
<td>Army</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Y (HS French)</td>
<td>Quartermaster Sergeant</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y (College Arabic)</td>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y (HS French)</td>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brent</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y (HS Spanish)</td>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameron</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y (unknown)</td>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connor</td>
<td>Army</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y (Spanish)</td>
<td>Allied Forces Training</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derek</td>
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<td>M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y (Spanish)</td>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y (Hindi/Urdu)</td>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence</td>
<td>Army</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y (Spanish)</td>
<td>Public Relations</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malcom</td>
<td>Ntl. Guard</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Infantry Sgt.</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Ntl. Guard</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y (Latin)</td>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas</td>
<td>Ntl. Guard</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y (Spanish)</td>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinn</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Air Force</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y (Spanish)</td>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travis</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y (Spanish)</td>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zach</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y (Unknown)</td>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: Participant profile overview for all 19 veterans
As will be indicated below, these participant profiles are not a comprehensive narrative of their experiences with ALC while they were deployed. Of the 19 participants’ case narratives, I chose six for detailed discussion in the next section of this chapter. I chose to include these six case narratives because 1) they represented a cross-section of the 19 participants and 2) their narratives bring the veterans’ voices to my research. The entire data analysis and the conclusions drew upon information provided by all 19 participants. So, providing brief participant profiles for each substantiates and shows the foundation of the data analysis. As with all the participants, details such as deployment locations and personal information that would reveal their personal identities have either been omitted or changed in order to protect their confidentiality.

- Alyssa joined the Army and deployed to Iraq soon after the end of her basic training. Her previous language experience consisted of French language classes in high school and one-year of college-level French. As a quartermaster sergeant, her job duties did not require her to know the Arabic language prior to her deployment. However, she had extensive contact with Iraq families while deployed. She reported that her experiences in Iraq with the language and culture motivated her to learn Arabic formally when she returned. She planned to use Arabic in her future career. (Case narrative provided as a representative sampling)

- Anthony enlisted in the Marine Corps reserves in order to help pay for his college tuition. Prior to his deployment to Iraq, he enrolled in an Arabic class for one academic term. As an infantryman, he came into extensive contact with Arabic
language speakers while deployed. Upon his return, he minored in Arabic, reaching the intermediate level of proficiency. However, after obtaining employment, he did not believe he would use his Arabic language in his future career because he had become interested in learning another less commonly taught language. (Case narrative provided as a representative sampling)

• Bob enlisted in the Navy and, after one tour of duty deployed to the Persian Gulf, returned to the states to enroll in Arabic language classes. He chose the Navy as a career path and believed that Arabic would help him obtain a certain job in the Navy. Not having ever studied a foreign language before, he found that the language classes were difficult and believed that many of his teachers were biased. However, he minored in the language as part of his college degree, even though he did not plan to use the language in his future career.

• Brandon enlisted in the Marine Corps and served one tour of duty in the Middle East prior to entering college. He had studied French and some Spanish in high school. He enjoyed learning about Arabic culture and Middle Eastern history but was reluctant to take Arabic language classes because he was more interested in continuing with French. However, he believed strongly that Arabic would be an important language for him to know as a Marine Corps officer, even if he didn’t plan to use the language in his military career.
• Brent enlisted in the Marine Corps prior to entering college. He had studied Spanish to the intermediate level in high school. After his experience as an infantryman in Iraq, however, he decided to minor in Arabic in college. His job duties while deployed required him to have extensive interactions with Iraq locals and translators from all over the Arab world. He also expressed that his in his military career plans, Arabic would be an essential language for him to know. (Case narrative provided as a representative sampling).

• Cameron enlisted in the Marine Corps in order to help him decide his future career goals. His duties while deployed brought him into contact with high-level Iraqi Army officials and U.S. State Department translators. His experiences in Iraq motivated him to learn about the Arabic language and culture and he strongly believed that knowing Arabic would further his career in the military.

• Connor joined the Army reserves and then he joined the National Guard reserves. His experiences and job duties in the National Guard required him to train Iraqi Army officials while he was deployed. Even though many of them already knew some English, Connor received Arabic language training as part of his job duties. He learned Iraqi Arabic to a low-intermediate level while deployed. His experiences led him to study formal Arabic (Modern Standard Arabic) when he enrolled in college coursework. His job obligations had made it difficult for him to complete Arabic language classes, but he studied a lot of the language and
culture on his own. His career plans involved using the Arabic he had learned while deployed and his self-study of the language.

• Derek enlisted in the Marine Corps immediately after high school. He was deployed to Iraq soon after completing his basic training. He had no prior foreign language classes and had not studied the Arabic language, but he did try to inform himself through news articles and internet resources about the region prior to deploying. After his first deployment to the region, he enrolled in college coursework that focused on Arabic language and the Middle East. Though he was unsure of his future career goals at the time of his last interview, he was interested in continuing his studies in ALC. However, his military obligations made it difficult for him to complete his coursework before he was re-deployed to the region.

• Jacob enlisted in the Marine Corps, unsure if he wanted to go to college. He had four years of Spanish in high school and tested into Spanish at the intermediate level once he decided to go to college. His job duties while deployed required him to interact extensively with local Iraqis. In many instances, he was appointed as the translator for his unit, even though he’d had no prior formal Arabic language training. Upon enrolling in college, he decided to enroll in ALC coursework based on his experiences in Iraq. However, after completing a few classes of Arabic language, he stopped to enroll in Spanish language classes due
to the difficulties he experienced of Arabic coursework over Spanish coursework. He did not express plans to use Arabic in his future career goals.

- Joseph entered the Marine Corps after one year of college. He deployed to Iraq soon after his basic training was completed. His job duties involved extensive interactions with local Iraqis while he was deployed. He made an effort to learn as much of the language as possible when he was in Iraq. When he returned, he enrolled in Arabic language coursework and planned a career that used the Arabic language. (Case narrative provided as a representative sampling).

- Lawrence enlisted in the Army with plans to have a military career. He had learned some Spanish in high school, but had limited exposure to Arabic prior to his deployment. While in Iraq, his job duties required him to interact with Iraq locals on a daily basis. After his first deployment to Iraq, he enrolled Arabic language and Middle East Studies coursework in college. He planned to minor in the language and possibly major in it for his bachelor’s degree. However, his military obligations interfered with the completion of his Arabic coursework. He was re-deployed before he could complete his first year of Arabic language coursework. He believed strongly that his career would benefit and he would be able to make a positive difference in his military career if he could become proficient in the language.
• Malcom enlisted in the Marine Corps before entering into college. He’d had no prior foreign language classes or training. While deployed to Iraq, he learned a few Arabic words and phrases. He enrolled in Arabic language classes upon his return because of his experiences while deployed. After completing the basic foreign language requirements, he discontinued his Arabic language studies because he believed that what he learned in class was not practical and that he learned more from classes in other disciplines. He believed that if he needed to learn more Arabic, the military would provide the training for him.

• Michael joined the National Guard after graduating from high school. He had received a traditional education at a private institution of which Latin was an integral part of the curriculum. While deployed, his job duties did not require him to know Arabic and he had limited interactions with native speakers. He enrolled in Arabic language coursework upon his return, but decided to discontinue his Arabic language classes because he did not like the way they were taught. He stated that he planned to continue studying the language on his own. He felt it was an important language to understand in the future but was not sure if knowing Arabic would be part of his career.

• Nicholas enlisted in the National Guard reserves in order to help pay for a college education and to begin a career in the military. He had taken four years of Spanish in high school prior to his deployment overseas. Upon enrolling in Arabic language coursework, he decided to minor in the language, but also
continued to learn Spanish. Originally, he had wanted to major in Arabic for a bachelor’s degree but his military obligations interfered with his college career plans. He planned to use Arabic as part of his military career goals, though he was unsure how the language would be used.

Quinn joined the Marine Corps reserved upon graduating from high school, where he had no previous foreign language classes. He was motivated to join the marines after September 11th, 2001 and to help fund his college education. His job duties as an infantryman in Iraq gave him extensive interactions with Iraqi locals. Upon his return from his first deployment, he enrolled in Arabic language coursework and decided to major in the language for a Bachelor’s degree. He continued to learn the language from Iraqi translators while deployed a second time in Iraq. After his second deployment, he arranged a study abroad opportunity with a fellow marine to take place in another Arab country. He plans to use his Arabic language skills in his career.

Richard also joined the Marine Corps reserves after high school because of September 11th, 2001 and to help fund his college education. He had one or two years of high school Spanish. While deployed, he had extensive interactions with local Iraqis and Arabic translators from all over the Arab world. He first began learning Arabic from the translators and one of his colleagues (Quinn) who had taken Arabic classes. After his second tour of duty in Iraq, he enrolled in study abroad program to another Arabic country to further study the language. Upon
returning to the states, he enrolled in Arabic language coursework and planned to
minor in the language and to use the language in his career, though he was still
undecided in what area his career would be.

- Sam joined the Air Force reserves immediately out of high school. He had one
  year of high school Spanish and had learned some German from a colleague.
  While deployed to Iraq, he came into contact with many Iraqi children. He
  believed that his interactions with them motivated him to learn the language and
  enroll in Arabic language coursework when he returned to college. He truly
  enjoyed his interactions with the Iraqi children and hoped to learn enough Arabic
to converse with them fluently when he returned to Iraq on his next deployment,
though he was unsure when that deployment would occur.

- Travis joined the Marine Corps reserves after attending college for several
  academic terms. His interest was outside the field of Arabic language and culture,
  but even the limited interactions that he had had with local Iraqis while deployed
  motivated him to learn the language when he returned to school. He had not yet
decided to major or minor in the language, but knew that Arabic was an important
language to learn in the future.

- Zach joined the Marine Corps out of high school and planned a career in the
  military. He was unsure of any previous high school language coursework.
  While deployed to Iraq the second and third time, he had extensive interactions
with Iraqis and translators, who taught him Iraqi Arabic and formal Arabic to the low-intermediate level. Upon returning to the states, he enrolled in Arabic language classes. Even though he did not intend to complete a four-year degree, he believed that he would be re-deploying to Iraq soon and did not want to forget any Arabic in the interim. He also believed that he needed some formal coursework to advance his proficiency. He planned to have a military career that used the Arabic language.

Six Representative Case Narratives

Six participant case narratives of the 19 participants are provided here in detail for in-depth analysis as a representative sampling. Table 4.2 (page 102) provides the demographic information for each case narrative provided. Including detailed case narratives for all 19 participants would have been too cumbersome and repetitive and would become distracting for the reader and detracting from the focus of this study. It is important to emphasize that all 19 narrative case-analyses were used to generalize commonalities and differences in their backgrounds that appeared in the data and that these narratives facilitated discussion of language learning motivations as well as other affective variables that may be present in the classroom. The six participant profiles included in detail here were chosen based on the richness, consistency, trustworthiness, and quality of the data provided through their interviews, interview transcriptions, field notes, observation notes, and the written answers to their questionnaires. These profiles give a brief history and background of the veterans’ language learning and cultural
exposure prior to their tours of duty in Iraq. They represent a cross-section of race, gender, military assignments, and length of deployment amongst all the veteran participants in this study. Finally, examination of these six case narratives sets a context for participants’ language and cultural learning experiences that contribute to the context they bring to the language classroom.

There are four sections to each case-narrative. The first section describes participants’ demographic data, prior language training, and their job duties. These data have varying levels of relevance to their intercultural interactions so some demographic detail may be more comprehensive than others. For example, some job duties required more intercultural interaction and warranted further discussion as they had a more dramatic impact on veterans’ experiences with Arabic language and culture (ALC). Some demographics are left out to protect participant confidentiality. Each participant discussed previous language training they had, either in high school, college, military, or semi-informal training they had received while deployed. The second section of each case narrative describes notable intercultural experiences and interactions, emphasizing those experiences that seem to relate specifically to issues of language or that seem to have had the most profound impact on the participant. This section also discusses their beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes about ALC. The third section describes the participants’ post-deployment language training (formal or informal), which includes their ALC learning experiences. Also described are the participants’ motivations to learn the language and any affective variables in the classroom. Finally, a summary of the narrative is provided.
Examining the motivations of these veterans to learn Arabic language and culture after their deployments is one of the main purposes of this study. A discussion follows examining the current language motivation theories within the context of these veterans’ experiences. Their intercultural experiences support the theoretical underpinnings of language learning motivation as well as other affective variables in the classroom. It is also valuable to understand the context that these veterans bring to the language classroom. The thematic analysis coupled with a discussion of current language learning theories reveals relationships between this context and their motivation.

In order to protect the participants’ confidentiality, none of their real names are used. All information such as geographic location, hometown, family name, and names of friends have been changed in order to protect their identities. Portions of the transcribed interviews, focus groups’ notes, and field notes are provided to offer support to the profile narrative and all foreign language phrases have been translated by the researcher.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Military Branch</th>
<th>Enlisted (E)</th>
<th>Active (A)</th>
<th>Pre-service language experience (Y/N)</th>
<th>Job Description during Deployment</th>
<th>Level of Arabic Studied – Informal (0)</th>
<th>Future Language/Culture Use in Education/Career? (Y/N)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alissa</td>
<td>Army</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Y (HS French)</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>Y</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>NCO</td>
<td>R</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y (College Arabic)</td>
<td>I</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>Navy</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>R, ROTC</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>I</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>NCO</td>
<td>R, ROTC</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y (HS French)</td>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>0 (Y)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brent</td>
<td>MC</td>
<td>E</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y (HS Spanish)</td>
<td>Infantry</td>
<td>1 (Y)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>MC</td>
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<td>R</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>Y (Hindi/Urdu)</td>
<td>Infantry</td>
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Table 4.2 Demographic Overview for Six Case Narratives Provided
Alissa’s Case Narrative

Alissa’s demographic data, prior language training, & job duties

Alissa is a white female attending school at a large university in the Midwestern United States. Alissa originally joined the Army reserves after a year of school at a smaller, tier 2 institution in the Midwest in order to help her pay for college tuition. She also liked the idea of serving the country through military service and found that the benefits made it worth her joining.

Prior to joining the military, she had met some college students from the Arabian Gulf area from whom she learned some basic words and phrases. She had also studied French in high school. She had always been interested in learning about other cultures early in her educational career. Her only exposure to Arabic culture aside from the friends she met in her first year of college was in a Linguistic Anthropology course. In the course they watched a video that covered some basic cultural practices in the Arab world:

I had started taking an [sic] Linguistic Anthropology class at __________ when I got deployed. We watched an interesting video on cultural differences that discussed some things such as not using the left hand, no showing the bottom of the feet, and not refusing beverages.

Though she had expected to get some Arabic language and culture (ALC) training in the two months prior to her deployment, pre-deployment training concentrated only on the Military Occupation Specialties (MOS) assignments:

The military did not offer us any training in this regard. Our 2 months in -- Prior to going to Kuwait/Iraq focused on based soldier tasks (from the manual), Watching “Black Hawk Down” and “Full Metal Jacket,” and playing spades.
During our discussion regarding her training, I asked her if she believed if she had received adequate training before deployment. She responded that she wouldn’t have known what was adequate at that point. She was unsure what to expect:

No, not really. We didn’t know what to expect. Most of the people I was with didn’t really show any interest in the culture… I didn't really talk to them about it. We were passing the time and we were all nervous. I thought I’d be with Americans most of the time anyway. I was since I was at Camp ______. But I did have some time off the base.

Her description of her job duties commensurate with her MOS did not include interacting with local Iraqi’s. Her MOS mainly involved cleaning, laundry, sewing and repairing items such as parachutes and tents as well as some maintenance and supply duties:

My MOS was ______, but I actually did the work of a _____ Supply Specialist, which meant that I manned a fuel tent and turned the generator switch to on to pump fuel into trucks as they came up. We also took the tankers to Kuwait and back to fill up (2 hour trip one way). I also had the responsibility for a couple of months of taking food to the other part of our company at the Port of Umm Qasr two times a day.

When asked if not knowing any Arabic hindered her job duties, she replied that it did not:

No, like I said in the survey, most of the people we dealt with were Third Country Nationals (TCNs) and they knew English okay. We weren’t supposed to really interact that much with the locals when we went out because they thought it would endanger us, but we interacted with them when we were traveling through towns and stuff. Mainly it was kids that would stare and point and ask us for candy. They’d say helwe helwe (candy, candy)... But I spent time with the refugee families on our compound so I learned stuff from them sometimes.

Alissa did not elaborate on whether or not she felt it was dangerous to interact with the locals. In fact, though they were not supposed to interact with locals, she stated that she learned a lot of ALC from the Iraqi refugee families that lived in her camp. If a
communication block occurred, she and the refugee families used visuals, drew pictures, or pointed. This seemed to be the most effective way to get the Iraqis what they needed.

*Alissa’s intercultural interactions, beliefs, perceptions, & attitudes*

Alissa had a lot of contact with refugee families who lived on the American military compound. The linguistic and cultural interactions she experienced occurred with men, women and children. Alissa recalled in greatest detail a woman named Jamila who had been married to an Iraqi bricklayer. Alissa understood that Jamilah was allowed to live on the compound after she had escaped her abusive husband. Because Jamilah was a victim of domestic violence, Alissa expressed a wish to interact with her. Alissa noticed that over time, Jamilah seemed to become more conservative in her manner and dress. Jamilah began to wear the black abayah that covered her entire body and rarely left her refugee dwelling. Eventually, she would only come to the door when food was delivered to them. Alissa wanted to talk to her more but could not, because the language barrier prevented interaction with her. Alissa was concerned for Jamilah’s psychological well being, because Jamilah couldn’t communicate with the medical staff on the base about her domestic abuse nor about the well being of her one-year-old child. Alissa did not know if Jamilah had reached out to the other Iraqi women on the base, but she didn’t believe so.

No, not really. She didn’t really speak English. She was real bad off. But she was smiling by the time we left. I mean, she got kicked out of her home because her husband was abusive and she left him and everything.

When asked if she felt frustrated that she could not communicate with her, Alissa responded:

Yeah, it was hard. Yeah, I didn’t know that much Arabic to have deep conversations and maybe she wanted a woman to talk to after all that and
all she had were men everywhere. I didn’t think the Iraqi women really talked to her or even each other and stuff.”

Alissa also had difficulty in talking with some of the men of the refugee families. Most of the men wanted to get supplies from the military personnel. Though she was able to give them supplies, she had difficulty understanding why the Iraqis asked for certain items such as sun block. Giving away unjustified supplies became troublesome for her and the rest of her unit. Because of language barriers, it was difficult to determine why the Iraqi people needed certain items, which, if sold on the black market, would get the soldiers into trouble. Widespread frustration among the Iraqis and military personnel alike resulted from the communication breakdown between the Iraqi families and soldiers:

To them it looked like we were just hoarding lots of stuff and not sharing it with them. So some of them got resentful towards us after a while. And I didn’t know how to tell them. We tried to use a translator, but there was never one available when this kind of problem came up.

Alissa spent a lot of time with a group of Iraqi refugee children. Simple vocabulary lessons from the children helped her to gain their trust and confidence. The easiest words were numbers and basic vocabulary. At some point, she gave them all animal names in Arabic, which the children seemed to like. There was a very tall teenager whom she named ‘Zirafe’ (Giraffe) and a short boy whom she named ‘Fil’ (Elephant). The children named Alissa ‘basoonah’ or ‘kitten.’ There was no school available to them so they spent much of the day in a designated play area where she could openly visit them and learn basic words from them. She tried to teach them some English but they did not seem interested. Eventually, however, she was able to teach them some basic dental hygiene and show them how to brush their teeth.
She enjoyed interacting with these children but the language barrier also posed a problem when she tried learning about why they had become refugees. Two of the children had burn injuries and one young girl had some type of traumatic brain injury. Alissa observed that the girl’s family treated her as a burden, because of her injuries and did not show concern for her welfare. At one point, Alissa wanted to take the young girl to the medical tent for a basic health check up, because she felt that the girl wasn’t getting appropriate medical care. However, the young girl would not go to the medical tent, and because of the language barrier, Alissa could not convince the father that the injury was possibly treatable. Alissa felt that the Iraqi family had given up hope for a future for their daughter and accepted the existence of her as burden to them forever.

Eventually, a change in command forced the Iraqi refugee families to leave the compound. Alissa believed that the injured girl would eventually be sold into prostitution and expressed regret that she never got her full name so that she could continue to contact with her.

After the refugee families left, Alissa had several opportunities to explore off the base. The first opportunity came when she and three other female army personnel were invited to Kuwait City, Kuwait accompanied by some of their Kuwaiti volunteer translators who had homes and families in Kuwait. Alissa’s immediate sergeant did not believe this invitation was a good idea, but the commanding officer believed they should go. Initially, she was excited about seeing another Arab country, but she was uneasy. In spite of misgivings on Alissa’s part, she and three other soldiers – two women and one male – drove to Kuwait city with four Kuwaiti translators. However, soon after they arrived in Kuwait City, Alissa and her two female colleagues realized that the translators’
intentions were ignoble. After arriving, the group was shown the Kuwaiti towers and the large Gulf Aquarium. One of the translators taught them some Arabic words such as the Arabic word for translator ‘mutarjam’ and some basic greetings, but, after having dinner, he took the male soldier home to meet his family leaving the three female soldiers with the three other male Kuwaiti translators, who took them to a private apartment equipped with a bar. Alissa and her colleagues immediately felt uncomfortable and left the apartment to stay in the lobby of the apartment building the rest of the evening. When I asked if she might have misinterpreted the intentions of the translators, she stated that she and her colleagues had not and that the translators were taking advantage of the soldiers’ lack of cultural knowledge:

Well, I don’t think they knew that we knew they had families and were all married. Also, we knew that they weren’t supposed to drink or have alcohol because it was against the law in Kuwait. So we just spent the rest of the night trying to get a hold of the other mutarjam [translator].

In the morning, they were all picked up by the fourth translator and driven to his family’s home where she met his mother and sisters. They gave the female soldiers gifts. Alissa explained that the Kuwaiti family members were able to speak English. At this point, she grew more suspicious of the other three translators because, the previous night, when the female soldiers had wanted to leave the apartment, the translators had claimed to not understand them. However, they had no difficulty communicating in English the Kuwaiti family. Alissa summarized the whole experience:

It was like they were banking on us not knowing what was going on – like in the culture and in the language. And I don’t know what they thought we would do, but we weren’t in seventh grade, so we knew.

Another experience off the base impressed Alissa. She had the opportunity to act as a military escort for a civil affairs unit. They traveled to a small town in southern Iraq,
and, while waiting outside the public administration office, some children had gathered and were begging for candy and water. Since Alissa had learned some Arabic at that point, she spoke some basic Arabic phrases to the children. However, she stated that upon hearing her speak Arabic, the children thought she was fluent in the language and they all started talking to her at once. When the children, speaking Arabic, surrounded her, she and her colleagues did not understand what the children were saying. Even though they didn’t understand the clamor, they were amused by the situation. However, eventually some of the children and the adults began referring to Alissa as ‘basoonah’, which was unsettling because the Iraqi refugee children back at the camp had referred to her by the same name several months before. When asked if she believed that refugee family had informed people in the town about her since the name was the same, Alissa answered that she did not believe so because the Iraqi family could not have left the compound at that time and she understood that they went to live in the northern regions in Iraq. When asked if she believed that there had been some kind of security breech from her compound, she responded that she didn’t believe so but couldn’t be certain.

Alissa’s post-deployment language education, experiences & motivation

Upon her return from Iraq, Alissa enrolled in a large midwestern university and began taking classes in French and Arabic. She had taken most of her basic requirements before entering the military. She started learning Arabic language through an individualized instruction program and enjoyed learning the language but wished she’d had more time to take actual classes. However, her time to complete her degree was limited due to her GI Bill and she wanted to save some of that money for a Master’s in Education teaching certification. She only completed three of her ALC classes before
graduation. She explained that much of what she learned helped her to gain some perspective on the experiences she had in Iraq:

Well, when I would be studying the alphabet, I would remember things like oh yeah I learned that before! And I’d get excited because it was like I knew more than I thought when I was there. Like, I remember learning the word for ice – thalj, and then I saw it on the side of a pepsi cooler and it was like this great milestone for me. Then, I saw it in the vocab list and realized that I knew it a long time ago. I learned a lot more there than I thought.

Because Alissa enjoyed learning Arabic, she participated in a number of extra curricular activities such as the English Speaking Partner’s program at her school. She was paired with a woman from Libya with whom Alissa practiced speaking Arabic. They exchanged one hour of Arabic with one hour of English. She also learned to cook Middle Eastern food and spent time with her partner’s family. Alissa described the experience as very different than her experiences with the Iraqi families. Even though the Libyan family was also at poverty level and had refugee status (like the Iraqis), Alissa believed that the family spent more time with each other and valued education more than the Iraqi families she had encountered. She also believed that the husband treated his wife with more respect, even though the wife still did most of the cooking and cleaning:

I don’t know exactly how to put it, but the Libyans; they seemed to take more care of their children or something. I mean, we had like one whole evening where we were cooking food and the husband was like helping us and stuff. It was just so different.

Alissa was unable to continue taking Arabic coursework when she was accepted into a teacher certification program for foreign language education. There was little time for any extra coursework even though she wanted to teach Arabic at the K-12 level. She expressed great frustration at not being able to continue Arabic but eventually accepted that teaching French would help her explore future options as a language teacher.
Alissa also felt strongly that her experiences with the Iraqi families, while deployed, motivated her to learn the language when in Iraq and after. She stated that having the cultural experience was something she could share with her students, even in the French classroom. Alissa further elaborated that she believed strongly that language teachers must have deep and affective cultural experiences in order to be good language teachers. She was strongly affected by a brief summer trip to France as a child with her grandfather and she felt it opened her mind to experiencing cultures different from her own. She was also convinced that learning a language without any cultural experiences detracts from the beauty of the language. Now, as a language teacher, she tries to incorporate her varied cultural experiences into the classroom to motivate her own students.

*Alissa Summary*

Alissa had intercultural experiences from an early age as a teenager which she believes made her more interested in and motivated to learn other languages. Even though her accounts of the interactions in Iraq seemed to emphasize the negative, she felt that they motivated her to learn the language after deployment. Though the negative experiences impressed her intensely, she expressed that her interactions with the Iraqi children and other local Iraqis were overwhelmingly positive. She came to realize that most of her negative experiences grew from a language barrier, contributing to cultural misunderstandings. Alissa’s perspectives on her own language learning are particularly meaningful since she is now a professionally trained language teacher. She is convinced that her experiences in Iraq motivated her to learn Arabic while deployed and afterward to want to teach Arabic at the K-12 level though she unfortunately did not have the
opportunity. It is clear that her intercultural interactions directly and permanently affected her believes, attitudes and practices regarding language learning and language teaching.

Anthony’s Case Narrative

*Anthony's demographic data, prior language training, & job duties*

Anthony is a white male who graduated with an Associates degree in Political Science from a local community college. His enrollment in college was interrupted a number of times due to his multiple deployments to Iraq. After completing his Associate’s degree, he transferred to a larger institution and received the Bachelor of Arts in International Relations with a certificate of study in Arabic language. He joined the United State Marine Corps (USMC) as an active duty enlisted corpsman prior to the onset of the Iraq war. He re-enlisted in the USMC reserves while attending school at a smaller research institution in the Midwest. He reached the rank of Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO) while deployed, which put him in charge of a squad (approximately nine to ten soldiers).

Anthony stated that he had basic middle school Spanish but had started learning Arabic before his deployment to Iraq. He also had three months (one academic quarter) of formal Arabic language training. When asked why he chose to take Arabic, he stated that he knew that he would eventually be sent to Iraq, and after September 11th, 2001, he felt it was an important language to learn. His community college courses in political science also covered the Middle East and peaked his interest in the region. He had one quarter of coursework toward a bachelor’s before he was deployed to Iraq.
He reported that they received only four hours of cultural training as part of their pre-deployment preparations so he felt fortunate to have taken coursework in the language. His academic Arabic course had covered the alphabet as well as some basic words and phrases. This training enabled him to at least glean basic demographic data from the Iraqis he encountered:

I mean I knew a little bit of stuff but after three months of college Arabic… because Arabic is a more difficult language so I was still basically on basic words and phrases. I could have a basic conversation like Hello My Name is… What’s you’re name? What do you do for a living? Where’s the bathroom? Little things like that but I couldn’t really get into anything more in-depth than asking someone what their name is. You know, basic profile questions and stuff.

He wished there was more time for him to take additional coursework in Arabic before he was deployed to Iraq:

I wish I would’ve taken more Arabic before I went to Iraq. It's a difficult language and I’m not linguistically inclined so it was difficult for me…

He was interested in studying abroad in an Arab country and had even applied for scholarships to study in Dubai. However, the program he had applied for was canceled for that year (2006) so he had to re-apply for another overseas Arabic language program in Lebanon. He was successful in attaining the scholarship but his trip was cancelled due to the outbreak of war between Israel and Lebanon in the summer of 2006:

I tried to get over to Dubai, but [the program] was unavailable by the time I tried to get into it. And, later, they were going to send me to Beirut and I was waiting for a scholarship to come through. The scholarship didn’t come through. But it actually worked out okay because I didn’t get to go to Beirut that summer and Israel started bombing Beirut that summer.

Anthony’s job duties in Iraq mainly consisted primarily of securing neighborhoods. He and his squad were to search houses block by block to look for weapons, contraband, and other evidence of insurgent activity. He had contact with local
Iraqis everyday where he was stationed. When asked if the language barrier posed a problem for completing his job duties, he stated that it didn’t seem to interfere. However, he also explained that even making an effort to speak Arabic seemed to ease some tension between the soldiers and the local population:

For the most part, with our job we were searching a quarter of the city a day. For the most part we got up in the morning, go into the city, ask to search someone’s house – house after house – then say thank you and move on. It became so routine that the locals would see us coming. Also, you’d only use about 12 different Arabic words or phrases doing the same thing over and over again. So the language barrier on the day to day stuff wasn’t too bad. The only times that I found it to be really frustrating was when you had to convey something really important and they didn’t understand. The locals, I think, tended to appreciate the fact that we were trying to speak Arabic. It helped a lot that they could see me making an effort to speak the language.

Anthony’s intercultural interactions, beliefs, perceptions and attitudes

Because of his previously described job duties, Anthony had extensive and daily interactions with local Iraqis. He was asked to elaborate on some of the most memorable interactions, good or bad, and also asked to elaborate on interactions that seemed to have the most linguistic and cultural significance. Many of his examples were of a general nature. He explained that many of his interactions occurred through the use of a translator or using the basic words and phrases that he had learned during his 3 months of Arabic language coursework in college. He also expressed his frustration with the inability to interact on a deep and meaningful level with local Iraqis. He felt that because he and his squad were “basically going through their houses and rummaging through their personal belongings,” it would have been helpful to put them more at ease. However, he also explained that most Iraqis knew why the Americans were there and expected them to come into their homes.
His first most significant interaction was an intense situation. Because of an exchange of gunfire in the area, an air strike had been ordered by central command to bomb specific targets in that neighborhood. Even though the Iraqi house he occupied was not targeted, it was important to remove the family in order to protect them from injury in case a missile would go off-target, a rare but possible occurrence. However, he was unable to communicate with the family. No translator was available or allowed to come to his location, so he resorted to drawing pictures on a small napkin in order to convey to the Iraqi family that they needed to leave their home. But the Iraqi father did not understand and hearing gunfire in the area was reluctant to leave with his family. His communication was extremely limited and the information he needed to convey to the family was very important:

When we were in the city of _____, Which was a really small town. We wound up getting ambushed and got into a really big firefight and it had gotten to the point where we’d taken casualties and they were calling in an air strike on the building that the insurgents were in and I was in a house with a family in it. I was trying to convey to the man of the house that he needed to take his family and get them out of the house so that they could be safely out of range of collateral damage. We were trying to get them to safety but he just had absolutely no idea what I was saying and I tried pulling out a piece of paper and I made a real bad drawing of house and of an airplane and he still wasn’t getting it. There was really no way we could get a translator safely to me to help.

When asked about other culturally significant interactions, Anthony stated that he was impressed with the Iraqis’ hospitality towards the American troops. Even those families who seemed to be resentful of the Americans’ presence in their hometown offered them food and drink, specifically bread and tea. Their behavior was unexpected. There was little open hostility towards the Americans while they searched homes, even though there was insurgent activity in the neighborhood as evidenced by the exchange of
gunfire in the area between the Americans and insurgents. He expressed that he had a great desire to communicate directly with many of these local Iraqis but was frustrated by his lack of language skills:

\begin{quote}
The most significant thing that I can say wow that’s totally Arabic would be chai and hummus. I mean, you could tell that there was some families that liked the fact that we were there. There were some families that didn’t like the fact that we were there. Some families that were indifferent towards it. But even among some of the families you could tell. They were staring at us and they didn’t like us one bit. But by God they would offer you tea and bread. It was kind of funny because you know in America if a large military force came through and started searching every house on the block I don’t think your typical American would offer foreign soldiers tea and bread at every opportunity they have. But boy we would like drink so much tea every day… and it was great… and the bread was great. It was always homemade because they’d make it every morning. You know, it’s funny because I think that’s the biggest thing I remember about, culturally, about it was the fact that whether they liked you or didn’t like you, you always got bread.”
\end{quote}

Translators played an important role in the cultural interactions between Americans and Iraqis. Translators came from various parts of the Arabic speaking world, some were Iraqis, some were Arab-Americans serving in the US military, and others were contracted by American firms. Anthony was tentative about the translators he encountered. One the platoon’s translators from Sudan had an accent that differed so widely from the Iraqi dialect, that many Iraqis didn’t understand him and his English seemed limited as well. Yet Anthony encountered another Sudanese translator who didn’t seem to have any problems facilitating communications between the Iraqis and the Americans. Most interesting was Anthony’s account of an Iraqi interpreter working closely with his unit who was discovered through intelligence channels to be a security risk. However, the need for translators was so great he was not terminated from his job but only transferred to another unit:
We had all kinds of different translators. There was one guy who had been in the US army for 10 years and happened to be an Arab-American. When the US invaded Iraq, he left the army and became a contractor. It quadrupled his pay. Translators like that were great. There was some guys [translators] that were pretty gung ho about being translators. Some were Iraqi and some were not. Then there were some who took the job for money. They didn’t really want to go anywhere with us. One translator, or ‘terp, that’s what we called them, he was from Sudan and had a really thick accent. Sometimes the Iraqis didn’t fully understand him. His English was okay but sometimes we didn’t understand him so that made it even more difficult… The only problem translator I can remember was there was one translator who seemed kind of cool… he was a younger guy and he was from Baghdad. When he came out to work with us he would bring all these like DVDs which was pretty common in Iraq. Anybody who went to a major city would come back with like DVDs pretty cheap… Then all of a sudden one day it was like poof he was gone. And we were told he was gone because the intelligence service had traced him to links to the insurgency. They said he was a bad guy but then we assumed he was no longer a translator, but they said oh no, translators are needed so bad that they just took him out of our unit and stuck him in some other unit. I guess they figured he couldn’t do any harm in that other unit.

Anthony stated that he was never really sure what to expect from the translators. He did learn some aspect of Arabic culture from them, but was reluctant to get close to the Iraqi translators for a number of reasons. First, they were very busy with their daily tasks, which left little time for leisure conversation. Second, after he had learned of the security issue they had with one of the translators, he was reluctant to spend any significant amount of time with them on the off-chance that he may reveal something that would compromise his unit’s security. Third, based on his interactions with translators while on duty, he wasn’t sure that information he would get from them would be accurate since their opinions and attitudes seemed to vary so greatly depending on where they were from.
Anthony’s post-deployment language education, experiences, & motivation

Upon returning from Iraq, Anthony continued his ALC studies at a regular four-year institution. He received 30 hours of Arabic language credit towards an Arabic studies certificate. No Arabic major or minor was offered at his school. However, he stated that if there had been a minor available, he would have minored in the language. He also expressed disappointment in his textbook and felt that compared to his middle school Spanish textbook, the Arabic textbook wasn’t as comprehensive. He would have liked to have been introduced to the vocabulary in a more thematic way. He also stated that he had learned a lot of Iraqi phrases and words as well as Iraqi pronunciation of Arabic, which came out in his classroom performance. He noted that his teacher would make minor corrections but wouldn’t necessarily mark the answers as incorrect:

   It was difficult for me but I guess the funniest thing from coming back was the Iraqi dialect stuff that sort of seeped into my Arabic. My Arabic teacher in _______ used to get a kick out of it. He used to think it was kind of funny because I would say things like shismak? For what’s your name instead of ma-ismuka? And I wrote some Farsi letters, too, because when we were writing something that I was just pronouncing out I would spell it with the farsi letters like with chai instead of shai…The instructor didn’t really mark it off he just kind of looked at it with amusement and corrected me when I was using Iraqi dialect.

When asked if his experiences in Iraq contributed to his motivation to continue learning the language upon his return, he answered that it “absolutely” made him want to study Arabic. He was unable to say whether or not he would pursue a job where he was specifically using Arabic, but he had taken an internship for a political think-tank in Washington DC specializing in the Middle East. He found that, even though he was “the lowest man on the totem pole,” he was the only one in the organization that was a military veteran and the only one that had any Arabic language training and experience.
At one point, he had started using a popular commercial computer program to review his Arabic vocabulary, but was frustrated by its lack of context and the structure. He affirmed that if a job opened up where he could use Arabic he would apply for it, but for personal reasons, he had recently become more interested in learning another critical language. He explained that it had a similar alphabet and some similar words to Arabic. However, he had no plans to take classes in that language at any college or university. His current job did not require him to use his Arabic skills.

Anthony’s Summary

Anthony’s intercultural interactions were both positive and negative as evidenced by his experiences with Iraqi hospitality, intense insurgent activity, and tentative feelings regarding translators. He was originally motivated to learn the language because of the September 11th, 2001 terrorist attacks, but he continued learning post deployment because of his experiences in Iraq, both positive and negative. He perceived that the limited ALC he learned from his initial college class helped him to connect with the local population, even though it was limited. He had a very positive attitude toward ALC during and after his deployment. It would appear that his motivation changed over time as he came in contact with Iraqis and was immersed in the ALC setting. His use of Iraqi dialect in post deployment language classes did not hinder or help him, the teacher being very tolerant and even amused by his Iraqi dialect. His motivation for continuing language learning post deployment was not connected to his job aspirations, though he said he would apply for a job requiring Arabic if it arose.
Bob’s Case Narrative

Bob is a white male who first entered the Navy as an active duty enlisted soldier. During his enlistment, he was stationed in the Arabian Gulf, off the coast of Iraq. He later joined the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) at a large Midwestern university and is now a fully commissioned officer holding a bachelor’s degree in International Studies and a minor in Arabic Language & Literature. Due to his current work assignment, transcripts of his interview must be kept confidential and only limited details from his interview can be included in this research.

Bob’s demographic data, prior language training, & job duties

Before his first deployment, Bob did not have any prior exposure to ALC and he didn’t know anything about the region. He did not have language training in high school prior to deployment, but he stated that he may have taken some middle school French. His unit didn’t have time for any cultural training, but he and some of his colleagues rented some movies about the Middle East to get them “psyched-up” or motivated for their mission. His duties did not require him to have extensive contact with Iraqis or Kuwaitis, but he did meet a few who had secured employment on the military base.

Bob began taking Arabic after his first deployment in the Middle East. His ALC training consisted of beginning level and intermediate level class work only. He originally had intended for Arabic to be a double major with International Studies, but he experienced frustration at the intermediate level of course work. He then decided to take the minimum number of classes required for a minor in ALC.
Bob’s intercultural interactions, beliefs, perceptions & attitudes

Bob’s first impression of the Arab world was that it was hot and there were no women visible on or off the base (further information about which country and which base must be kept confidential). He had little opportunity to leave the base, but remembered that this was his most memorable impression – that there were almost no women. Women were not common in his area of operation but it was still strange to Bob not to see any women at all. When asked to elaborate on this, Bob couldn’t be sure if higher military authorities purposely orchestrated their absence or if their absence reflected problems that gender mixing caused in the culture. When asked what he perceived these gender problems to be, he explained that Arabs have problems with women if they’re not wearing traditional dress. He stated that the absence of women didn’t seem to interfere with completing his job duties.

His only major interaction was with some of the local Arab personnel that worked on the base. They were screened very carefully due to the proximity of some of the equipment and supplies. He learned about foods and some of the cultural practices. For instance, he learned that one should not show the bottom of the foot when crossing one’s legs and men don’t shake hands with women. I asked if he had learned that directly from one of the workers and he answered that he couldn’t remember exactly. He remembered having lunch in a common area on several occasions with a mixed group of his colleagues and the local Arabs working on the base, which was where he may have learned much of those aspects to the culture. There were no translators on the base and he did not speak of coming into contact with any translators so it is unclear how
communication occurred between his unit and the local Arab workers. He did not learn
any Arabic words or phrases that he could remember while stationed overseas.

Bob’s post-deployment language education, experiences & motivation

Bob began taking Arabic his first term in college. After his return from his first
deployment, he took Arabic through an individualized instruction program where he had
a negative learning experience. He had to take individualized instruction because the
class times conflicted with his rigorous officer-training schedule. Then, he had to repeat
the second class as he was as he was unable to take Arabic again for three academic
terms (almost a full year). When he repeated the second class in a classroom setting, he
realized that he hadn’t learned what he should have in the individualized instruction
program, and he didn’t even know that he had been misunderstanding material until he
got into the classroom setting. When asked about cultural information relevant to
language studies, Bob claimed that he didn’t learn any cultural information from his
Arabic language materials, either in the classroom or in individualized studies, but had
learned ALC information from his International Studies and Political Science classes.

He felt that in his Arabic classes, taught by a teacher of Arab origin, it was
presumed the students already knew most of the basic grammar and cultural material
because he was in a class with many heritage speakers (students of Arab decent studying
Arabic language). Because of this incorrect presumption, he felt out of place in the class.
When I asked him for specific examples, he gave the example of learning to say ‘to
have.’ He explained that it wasn’t until his intermediate class, taught by professor of
non-Arab origin, that he learned it wasn’t a verb in Arabic. Other intermediate students
knew it wasn’t a verb. He had visited the non-Arab professor to get additional help
before the test and the professor explained the prepositional-phrase concept of ownership. At that point, he felt his Arabic language education was sub-standard. He suggested the possibility that his being in the military made teachers of Arab origin prejudiced against his learning the Arabic language. It seemed such a simple concept to explain and none of his teachers of Arab origin had ever explained it directly. When asked if he had ever gone to some of the teachers of Arab origin for help with this concept, he did not directly answer that he had gone to their office hours outside of class. He stated that their ‘stock answer’ was ‘that’s just the way we say it.’ I suggested that maybe his teachers of Arab origin didn’t have a solid grasp of grammar so they were unable to explain the concept adequately and the non-native teacher was able to relate to his problems between Arabic and English better than a ‘native speaker.’ Bob conceded that this may have been the case, but had found these problems so frustrating that he did not want to major in the language, so he continued only with the number of credit hours that would give him a minor.

By the time Bob had decided to stop Arabic at the intermediate level, he had received his orders for his military post after graduation. These orders did not require him to know Arabic, nor did they build on any language or cultural information that he had learned so he didn’t feel it was necessary to continue for his job. He stated that his original motivations for taking Arabic were two fold: 1) it looked good in his military portfolio to have a foreign language, and 2) he felt Arabic was an important language to learn. When asked if his ALC training helped him to get his military post, he answered that he didn’t think so. Regarding the second reason, he was asked if he still felt it was important and his response was that it was good for non-Arabs to learn ALC, but they should have more teachers of non-Arab origin just in case there’s bias against them. I
asked him if he felt he got authentic language from a teacher of non-Arab origin for there is a school of thought that non-native teachers cannot provide authentic language (Thomas, 1999). He stated that he felt just the opposite, that teachers of Arab origin are more likely to give inauthentic language if they have a bias against someone learning Arabic.

When asked about his overall intercultural experiences, his attitude seemed positive with respect to his history, political science and international studies classes in spite of his frustration with his ALC coursework. And he continued to express interest in learning the actual language, even stating that given a better foundation in the language with better teachers, he may have chosen a different career path. Because he had such a low confidence level in his own knowledge of Arabic, he did not apply for a military commission that required it. When asked about studying abroad, Bob responded that he would like to go someplace like Jordan or Egypt to study but there was little time to work that into his course schedule along with his ROTC and family obligations. He also stated that he wanted to graduate as soon as possible since his GI benefits would run out if he extended his college career without graduating. Bob had no plans to continue with Arabic after graduation because his military post/MOS did not require it but he intended to keep his ALC training on his resume.

Bob’s Summary

Bob’s exposure to the language and culture were limited while deployed in the Middle East. It is unknown to what extent he isolated himself from exposure or if his job duties isolated him. His classroom experiences seem to reflect that his limited cultural contact was self-imposed, but there may be external variables not accounted for in the
questionnaire or the interview. Most of his exposure to Arabic language and culture came through his coursework and his intercultural experiences, through his interactions with teachers. He expressed feelings of mistrust towards teachers of Arab origin, even though he never overtly stated that these feelings carried beyond teachers of the language to the entire population. Originally he believed ALC proficiency would help him attain a military commission. However, he did not apply for any commissions that required Arabic due to his expressed low-proficiency confidence.

Brandon’s Case Narrative

Brandon’s demographic data, prior language training, & job duties

Brandon is a white male with an extensive career in the United States Marine Corps. He initially joined as enlisted infantry and was promoted to a Non-Commissioned Officer (NCO position) soon after his first deployment to Iraq. He later joined the Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) at a large Midwestern university and now is working toward a bachelor’s degree in history or political science (at the time of the interview he was still undecided) with a minor in French language and literature. Brandon’s high school had a progressive French language program and he spent a summer studying in Paris before his receiving his high school diploma. Brandon has taken advanced level college coursework in French. He stated that his study abroad experience inspired his interest in Europe and World War II history.

Brandon’s job duties in Iraq involved internal security of the US Embassy compound in Baghdad, located in one of Saddam Hussein’s former palaces. He described his duties as very strict and limited. He and his colleagues did come into
contact with a wide variety of officials and military soldiers from other countries as well as locals. However, his units was instructed not to interact with the local population and members of other militaries:

Yeah, it’s in Baghdad. Our job was internal security, holding classified material and providing security for offices, the ambassador, the regional security officer, and all the head guys. General Casey was there at that time as well as five or six other generals. All the intelligence officers operated from there, the State Department and all their political and economics officers. On a daily basis our interaction was with other Americans and very occasionally we would meet an Iraqi official or officer there on official business and we provided security for them. We were actually instructed while we were there not to interact with anyone else, including other branches of the service. The reason for that was just one to keep us separated… there was a lot of people there, all the services, the MNF1 – the Multinational Services Force, their headquarters was there, General Casey was their commander at the time. All the foreign military was there so as far as us, they wanted us to keep our reputations clean so they just didn’t want us to even associate with them because they were counting on us not to anything wrong in our job. They didn’t want us to cause any international incidents, I guess.

Soon after his sojourn in Iraq, Brandon was redeployed to Yemen with similar job duties – Embassy Guard Duty. In contrast to his Iraq experience, prior to his deployment in Yemen, he received regular Arabic language and culture training from a Yemeni man employed by the US military. They met for two hours every week to learn about appropriate sayings, history, culture and the religion of Islam. So, even though they had not received language or cultural training for Iraq, his unit did receive ALC training for their mission in Yemen. He attributed the difference in approach to the difference in job duties:

Where I got language and culture training was when I was in the same duty – I was a marine embassy guard in Yemen where we had more interaction with the locals. We took a language class two hours – one hour twice a week um… and we were in a mentor role or role model for the local guard force there. We trained them on how to do the external security while we took care of the compound.
I asked Brandon if he felt that there would have been greater negative consequences in Iraq than in Yemen if his unit had caused any linguistic or cultural misunderstandings. He replied that that was definitely one of the factors in limiting contact with local Iraqis. He emphasized that in Iraq, they were dealing with the Multi-National Force (MNF), which was comprised of European forces as well as some military and diplomatic personnel from Russia, China and other countries. He felt that there could have been major diplomatic incidents if American forces had acted inappropriately and that there had not been enough time to give his unit enough proper ALC training because of the complexity of the Iraqi diplomatic compound. However, in Yemen, his unit was training the Yemeni soldiers to protect their own embassies, so interaction with them was unavoidable.

The ALC training that Brandon received in Yemen focused on what he termed ‘mission essential’ phrases.

The main goal was to learn what they call Mission Essential Phrases and all that means is how to tell people to ‘stop’ and ‘put your hands up’ and ask simple questions for yes or no answers; how to say ‘bomb’ ‘where is it?’ All those little things that you might want to know.

He remembered that one of his colleagues became fluent while in Yemen due to personal relationship with a local Yemeni woman. Brandon felt that it would have been great to know more Arabic but there wasn’t time. He was sure that he was missing some cultural references and felt that sometimes the Yemeni military personnel made jokes at their expense and, because he didn’t know Arabic as well, he didn’t get the jokes:

Well, its never fun to think someone’s making fun of you. You want to be in on the joke. And then you’re not sure if its friendly or not sometimes.
I asked Brandon if he would have taken Arabic classes before deploying to Iraq given the opportunity. He replied that he wasn’t as interested in learning the language at that time, as he was interested in serving his country as a U.S. Marine. Besides, he added, there were no classes available where he lived and he did not feel that he was a strong enough language learning to learn Arabic on his own.

Brandon’s intercultural interactions, beliefs, perceptions and attitudes

Brandon deployed to three different Arabic-speaking countries – Iraq, Kuwait, and Yemen. As he described, his job duties in Iraq and Yemen were very similar, but the level of intercultural contact was very different. Brandon attributed these differences to 1) the nature of the diplomatic mission in Iraq vs. that of Yemen, 2) the sensitivity of the location and materials handled by his military unit and 3) the duties required by their mission in Iraq vs. Yemen. In Iraq his unit’s duties were to secure the base while in Yemen they were training Yemeni military personnel. Even though Brandon did not recall any significant intercultural experiences while in Iraq, he had several significant experiences while in Yemen.

I remember one that we could never seem to understand. And this was just the language teacher in Yemen… We asked him to help us understand this Inshallah – if God wills… He would say next week we’ll have class inshallah… We thought it meant God Willing, we’ll all get together and have another language class, and he said, yes, Inshallah. So I said, what if something happens? What if you oversleep? Does that mean that God didn’t want us to have language class that day? So we went back and forth with this for a while and it went no where. It really went nowhere. But what it really came down to was a different paradigm. It was completely different. We saw it as, it’s our fault if we don’t show up and he saw it as it’s not up to you. But it was just a completely different way of looking at something. We were looking at the same concept from two different cultural paradigms.
Brandon attributed the differences in meaning with the phrase “inshallah” with a basic cultural understanding of the role of religion in daily life. After his deployments to Iraq and Yemen, he had read a book called The Arab Mind (Patai, 1983). Because he knew he would deployed to the Middle East again in the future, he wanted to learn something about politics and history and that book made Brandon aware of the profound differences between Eastern and Western views of “God’s Will.” The book also gave context to many of his experiences in Iraq and Yemen and reinforced his sense of an “Arab mindset.”

I also asked Brandon to expand on major differences he encountered between the Iraqi and Yemeni cultures since he seemed surprised that the two countries exhibited such observable differences:

Iraqis are more advanced. Yemen is the dark ages, they’re very very traditional you know from everything that I’ve learned about…there’s probably an ‘average Arab’ out there and the Yemenis are below average. In just the way they think – not to put them down or anything… I ended up reading The Arab Mind a couple years after I left Yemen and it confirmed a lot of the stuff that they were telling me. The mentality that I experienced there, compared to what I experienced in Iraq. Maybe the Yemenis were just more religiously inclined, but sometimes it’s difficult to describe. It just seems like the Iraqis have bridged they’re world to the more modern world. There were times in Yemen it was like they were four hundred years behind… it was like night and day for me. I tried to learn as much about it [the language and cultural differences] as I could, because I was curious. And I didn’t want to create any friction or be judgmental. I just wanted to learn a little bit about it.

In spite of Brandon’s limited contact with Iraqis, he had noted cultural differences between Iraqis and Yemenis. I asked him if he felt that it was his experiences in Iraq or Yemen that motivated his increased interest in learning about the language and culture. Brandon believed that it was his Iraq experiences that were more influential on his decisions to learn language than his experiences in Yemen. Even though he had more
contact with Yemenis on a daily basis, he would have been more likely to use ALC training in Iraq, because of the volatility and the military strategic importance of Iraq. He had been totally unaware of the numerous differences between culture and dialect among Arab countries prior to his deployment:

We really didn’t go over anything like the Middle East in high school. I didn’t really know what to expect other than what our CO (commanding officer) had told us.. I was kind of surprised that they were so different. Not that I pre-judged or anything or that anyone was better. But I didn’t know how modern thinking the Iraqis were. I just assumed that they were all similar minded like Yemenis.

I asked Brandon about his experiences with translators while in Iraq. Most of the translators he met were American citizen contractors with the high level of clearance required in the diplomatic compound. He seemed impressed with their level of professionalism but did not have much interaction with them because of the limitation orders in his unit:

I knew a couple, we didn’t have much opportunity to work with them and they were all the really high paid ones since they were the ones that were translating for the general and the higher ups. I knew one translator who was in the Army or maybe it was Air Force and he got out just as we were invading Iraq. He went to work for one of the contractors and got paid four times more than the military guys. I think outside the compound, people just hired whatever local person they trusted at the time. But I don’t know if there was any rhyme or reason to it.

Brandon’s post-deployment education, experiences, and motivation

Upon his return to the US, after his second deployment, Brandon began taking basic ALC classes with his college coursework. He planned to continue learning Arabic for two main reasons; 1) a foreign language was required for his major, and 2) he felt that knowing Arabic would have a direct impact on his career. However, he then dropped the language class because he was also participating in the ROTC program and there was a
time conflict. I asked him why he did not take the Arabic class through the available independent study option. He answered that he needed to have a classroom setting to learn the language since he felt unsuited for self-study or independent study of such a hard language. He also suspected that the form of Arabic presented in the academic classroom wasn’t really the kind he wanted to learn:

That was kind of the way I saw it. I want to concentrate on the classes that are going to help me with the career and since we aren’t really speaking anything in class and it wasn’t anything like what I learned in Yemen, I want to spend my time right now on the real vital stuff. So I’ll take what I need to for graduation, but I probably won’t go into it as a major full time.

Brandon reiterated that his ROTC schedule also demanded much of his time so he didn’t have the time he needed to study Arabic outside of class. He explained that the military wouldn’t send him anywhere unprepared and he could be trained in Arabic as part of his military career:

Honestly the way I look at it you with this: pertaining to my career it’s almost with total certainty that I’ll end up using Arabic again in the future if I take it. That’s just the way its going. Because ten years from now there’s no possible way that we’re not going to be in the Middle East. So, guarantee it. I don’t really have a huge interest in learning Arabic. Because I think if it were entirely up to me I think I’d pick like French or something. Not just because French is easier but because it’s a language I want to learn. I want to go there sometime and blend in and enjoy the scenery, take a trip. French culture is more interesting me to me than Arabic culture because its the grass roots of Europe. That’s how I look at it. It’s just something that I would prefer. But, I will probably take Arabic because it will give me the competitive edge in a military career. I could justify taking French knowing that if I go into the military and they need me to speak Arabic they’ll teach me. They don’t send you anywhere unprepared.

When asked if his experiences in Iraq and Yemen contributed to his interest in learning about ALC. Brandon responded that they did. He also felt strongly that we (the United States) would be involved in Iraq for a long time, but he couldn’t elaborate on the nature
of that involvement. Therefore, he predicted that language skills would be necessary in order to have a successful military career.

Brandon’s Summary

Though Brandon had limited contact with Iraqis while stationed in Iraq, his experience there, combined with his intercultural interactions with his Yemeni teachers and Yemeni military personnel, motivated him to learn about ALC when he began coursework in college degree. Overall, Brandon’s reasons for learning the language and culture after his deployment seemed to be instrumental (Dornyei, 2003) for attaining a desired job, or military commission. However, he was not able to explain exactly what job he wanted which might require ALC skills. He seemed to feel it was important but couldn’t express how it was important. ALC in the academic classroom did not reflect Brandon’s experiences in Iraq, which resulted in his perception that he wasn’t useful ALC. So, he dropped his Arabic language courses in order to spend time on coursework and activities that he felt were more relevant. He focused his coursework on the requirements to his degree.

Brent’s Case Narrative

Brent is a white male with a bachelor’s degree in Security & Intelligence studies and with a minor in ALC from a large midwestern university, to which he had transferred from a local community college. Brent’s commission required that his recorded interview and interview notes be kept confidential in order to protect his identity. However, certain non-sensitive elements relevant to his ALC training, previous language history, and duties while deployed in Iraq are included.
Brent’s demographic data, prior language training, & job duties

He joined the United States Marine Corps (USMC) Reserves as an enlisted soldier and served one tour of duty in Iraq before attending college. Brent had learned some high school Spanish, but he stated that he did not remember any of it. He stated that he joined the USMC Reserves for a number of reasons – the two primary being to serve his country and to help pay for his college education. Brent explained that he had always wanted to join the USMC and to learn about other cultures, but his interest in the Middle East was peaked after September 11th, 2001. Upon learning of his deployment to Iraq, Brent began reading as much about the region as he could. He was unable to take formal classes but he used the Internet to research and read as much as possible even though it was difficult for him to discern what sources were credible. He was aware that there was bias, but didn’t know enough about the region to know how to recognize it.

Immediately before their deployment, Brent’s unit participated in a one-week class on Islam, Arabic history, culture and language. An Iraqi national taught the course. Brent did not know if this type of training was common for US Marines deployed to Iraq. He said the class was very interesting and that the teacher was very friendly, which put many of his colleagues at ease. Brent felt that many of his colleagues had had very negative opinions of Arab nationals and especially Iraqis before the course, though he did not feel he shared their negative opinions. After the week long training course and interacting with the Iraqi teacher, some of his colleagues seemed to become more accepting. In the class, they were taught some basic words and phrases. Then one evening before they deployed, the teacher taught them some Arabic profanity, when they took him out for drinks. According to Brent, this was a real bonding process for the
Marines in his unit. Even though they did not have any more contact with that instructor, the social contact, changed his colleagues’ attitudes so that when they began their job duties in Iraq involving extensive contact with local Iraqi civilians, they were more sympathetic.

_Brent’s intercultural interactions, beliefs, perceptions, and attitudes_

Brent’s most notable experience in Iraq involved an older Iraqi woman who approached his squad while they were on patrol. The woman had been holding a plastic bag and holding her hand out to them as well as gesturing. There had been a number of incidents that week involving female suicide bombers, so Brent’s unit was on guard for any suspicious activity. Brent felt frustration that he did not know the language well enough to communicate effectively with the woman. The only word he remembered at the time was ‘qif’, meaning ‘stop.’ The woman had stopped but Brent stated that he could tell she was desperately trying to communicate something to his unit. Their location was somewhat precarious since they had stopped immediately before an intersection.

Apartment-type buildings with multiple stories surrounded them and they were tasked with securing that particular block for safe troop movements. He knew they were vulnerable in their position but they could not move forward until the situation with the Iraqi civilian had been resolved. The woman remained in the intersection for almost two and a half hours while his unit waited for a translator to arrive from another city. He felt sympathy for the woman because not only was she elderly, but she was also suffering from thirst in the oppressive heat and Brent couldn’t give her any water. Moving forward to her direct location could have resulted in the detonation of an improvised explosive
device (IED) so he and the rest of his colleagues in his unit were ordered to stay in their present location until they could accurately analyze the situation with the use of the translator.

Brent’s frustration peaked when they finally discovered that the woman was warning them that a sniper with a rocket launcher had been waiting in a building around the corner, presumably to fire at them. She had come to warn Brent’s unit. However, because of the language barrier, not only did she have to yell out her information to them from half a block away, putting herself in danger, but in the two and half hours it took for the translator to arrive, the armed sniper was able to avoid capture. He stated that just some simple phrases such as ‘corner,’ ‘sniper,’ ‘window,’ and some pointing could have resulted in the capture of an insurgent and thus further securing the city, which was what they were tasked to do.

When asked about his experience with translators in Iraq, Brent explained that translators were in high demand and there were too few of them to accompany every single unit on every mission. He did not have much contact with them, because, for some reason, which he was unable to explain, his unit was not assigned a translator even though they had daily interactions with local Iraqi citizens. Perhaps, because his unit was tasked with securing streets and did not enter homes, they were not expected to need a translator all the time. However, as the incident with the elderly Iraqi woman proved, there were times that the language barrier put them in more danger than would have existed if they had learned some Arabic prior to deployment.
**Brent’s post-deployment education, experiences & motivation**

Upon Brent’s return, he began taking Arabic classes along with other coursework toward a bachelor’s degree. He was attending part-time both the local community college and a four-year institution. Enrolling at both institutions allowed him to take a large number of credit hours, including two and three classes of ALC simultaneously in one academic quarter, which helped him save on the tuition money that was available to him through the GI Bill.

He stated that he was not someone who learned language easily, so he found the Arabic classes difficult. He wanted to finish the more challenging classes first so he would have less academic stress closer to the completion of his degree. He explained that the Arabic language classes offered more academic Arabic rather than speaking, which was not as practical for his language learning and career goals. He intended to return to Iraq either in the military or working for a private company to help in the rebuilding of Iraq. Brent was uncertain at that point in exactly what capacity he would return to Iraq, but he was adamant about returning. I asked him if he felt his experiences in Iraq contributed to his motivations to learn Arabic. He responded that it was definitely the reason he was taking ALC classes. He would not have tried to tackle a language as difficult as Arabic if he had not been to Iraq and had not had the experience. He also realized after he was exposed to some formal Arabic learning how much important information he had missed during his deployment. The more he learned about the history and culture of the Middle East, the more he reflected. His perspective had definitely changed, but he could not elaborate on how his intercultural experiences and subsequent language training effected the perspective change. His opinions regarding the Middle
East, in the abstract were negative, but when he experienced intercultural contact on a person-to-person level, he did not share the same biases as his colleagues. He confessed that he had some negative attitudes toward the Middle East before he was deployed and before his college coursework were negative, but he did not share his colleagues’ negative biases against Arabs before their deployment. He seemed to be very unbiased toward the Iraqi instructor who taught their one-week pre-deployment class.

Though Brent was adamant that his Iraq experiences motivated him to learn the language, he indicated that he had gone as far as he could with coursework in ALC in an academic context. He believed upper level classes focusing on Middle Eastern literature were outside the scope of his language ability and language goals. He wanted to concentrate on advanced level Arabic conversation, which was not part of the college coursework offered. At least, that was the impression he was given by other students in the Arabic program. He had also discussed coursework with professors who could not explain to his satisfaction how a focus on Arabic historical literature and Arabic poetry would provide training in conversational skills. He did not want to spend money on classes not geared toward his linguistic and career goals. He believed he would learn more by personal intercultural contact with “native” speakers (people of Arabic origin). When asked if he preferred a teacher of Arab origin, he replied he liked having instructors who learned “from scratch,” as he had, but he desired one or two sessions a week in a dialect, which would make him feel his training was more comprehensive. Because his university did not offer that, he wanted to pursue dialect training after graduating. He did not know how much he would use language in his career, but he was certain that knowing the language would be an important tool for him in the future.
Brent Summary

Brent had little knowledge of Arabic language and culture prior to his military experience, but stated interest in other cultures. He seemed to embrace the little training he received prior to his deployment. His deployment influenced his motivation to learn the language and even solidified his language learning goals. His most influential and memorable intercultural experience while deployed in Iraq centered on the language barrier issue. Though he did not attain advanced level proficiency through his college coursework, he planned to continue studying the language on his own.

Joseph’s Case Narrative

Joseph’s demographic data, prior language training, & job duties

Joseph is an American citizen of Indian origin who joined the U.S. Marine Corps (USMC) after attending two years of college. He had tired of school and decided to join the military in order to help him find some direction toward a specific career. When he left, he wasn’t sure if he would return.

I just wanted to do something better. I was really bored in my classes and I had trouble seeing how anything I did was going to be… practical in the real world. There were recruiters on the campus and I always thought that the Marine Corps was the way to go so one day I just did it [enlisted].

Prior to Joseph’s deployment, he had taken two years of high school Spanish and had learned to speak an Indian language when he was younger. However, upon his family’s migration to the United States, he began learning English before he started school and was not raised as a bilingual. The Marine Corps offered a one-hour cultural training session before sending Joseph’s unit to Iraq. Joseph stated that the teacher of the one-hour course was a fellow USMC enlisted soldier who had been previously deployed
to Iraq and it soon became obvious to Joseph and his colleagues that the teacher was perpetuating negative stereotypes in his training:

He stood up there for an hour and proceeded to teach about every negative stereotype you can think of. I mean, there was some I didn’t even hear of before. Like that they treat all their women bad and they all hate Americans. I didn’t know much about Iraq but I knew that those were stereotypes and they weren’t going to all be true. I mean, not every single Arab is going to beat his wife or be an insurgent. Since they kept drilling into us that we had to make sure we treated everyone there with respect, this guy didn’t have any at all based on the stuff he said. So it was kind of obvious. Plus he didn’t know any language at all, even we learned how to say hello at some point, and he didn’t even know that.

Even though Joseph did not know about ALC, he knew about stereotypes because of his own family background. He recognized the teacher’s negative bias based on the language and phrasing used to describe Iraqis. Having experienced racial stereotypes and prejudice directed at his own family when they came to the U.S., Joseph was sensitive to the disrespectful attitude and disparaging comments of the trainer. Joseph, as well as his colleagues, was skeptical of the information they were receiving from the trainer and most of them did not believe that the Iraqis were being presented accurately.

Joseph’s unit was a security detail that was stationed at various security checkpoints throughout Baghdad and surrounding cities. For purposes of confidentiality, these locations are not revealed but Joseph had regular, daily interaction with local Iraqis. Using a translator, Joseph’s job was to speak with every driver who came through the checkpoint and to search every car that seemed suspect. These inspections took a variety of forms: some were interviews with Iraqis, some were physical vehicle searches, and some inspections required a background check on the individuals driving American contract vehicles. Most of these contractors were local Iraqis hired by American firms to drive supplies between cities. His unit was given cards with basic phrases and
instructions translated into Arabic and transliterated into English in order to facilitate ease of communication. However, the cards were given to them at too late a time for Joseph or his colleagues to memorize these phrases and their meanings. Moreover, he explained that the cards were often left behind because US troops had to carry a burdensome amount of supplies with them while on active duty. So they relied heavily on their translators.

*Joseph’s intercultural interactions, beliefs, perceptions and attitudes*

Joseph was confronted with the language barrier almost immediately. During his first inspection, he said “Shalom” to the Iraqi gentleman driving the car. “Shalom” is the Hebrew version of the Arabic phrase “Salaam,” both meaning “peace” and a common greeting in both Hebrew and Arabic. Joseph admitted that because he was a bit nervous, he had confused the Hebrew greeting with the Arabic at this first intercultural interaction with the Iraqi local. He couldn’t even remember learning the Hebrew word. The Iraqi gentleman was offended and believed Joseph to be making a political statement regarding Israel. He began yelling and spat on Joseph. He did not understand his mistake at first. Fortunately, with the translator’s prompt help, the encounter ended with the Iraqi man and his family drinking tea with the translator and the Americans and all were laughing about the miscommunication and misunderstanding. Joseph was understandably grateful to have the translator there, or the incident could have ended violently:

> So, I was just confused and I said ‘shalom’ instead of ‘salaam.’ The Iraqi guy, he looked at me for a minute, then started yelling something and then he spit on me. Wow, that made my guys really mad. By then, all my guys

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1 Prior to the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2002, Iraq had not recognized Israel as a country and had threatened to bomb Israel on a number of occasions. This was propaganda tactic used by the Saddam Hussein regime to garner support of the Iraqi people behind Saddam’s Baathist regime. There still exists today animosity towards Israelis and Jews in Iraq, as well as throughout most of the Middle East (Goldschmidt, 2008).
were coming over to us and one of them grabbed the Iraqi guy by the jacket and I grabbed him. He started punching me, but he was hitting my flack jacket, so it probably hurt him more than it hurt me. The translator jumped in and there was all this confusion and yelling. The guy’s family started freaking out. And the translator was yelling ‘No! No! No! – Salaam, not Shalom!’ Then he looked at the Iraqi guy and explained to him that I was an idiot and meant to say ‘salaam.’ So it took a while to sort out what happened. But the guy di like a one-eighty and started laughing and patting me on the back. But in the end we were all sitting around and smoking cigarettes and laughing about the whole thing. But if that translator hadn’t been there, it would have been really bad. So that was my very first interaction with any Iraqi, it was kind of surreal.

Joseph underwent a change in attitude toward learning the language and began paying attention to the language after that incident. He spent more time with the interpreters/translators to learn as many phrases as possible. Joseph described himself as “not a language learner” and memorizing some of the phrases and meanings was difficult for him. In time, he improved his skills through repetition of words and phrases, becoming more proficient and comfortable with ALC. As he became accustomed to his job and his surroundings, Joseph realized that when he used Arabic while conducting interviews and searches of vehicles, he seemed to put the Iraqis at ease and their attitudes towards him changed in spite of his rudimentary Arabic and often inaccurate pronunciation.

Joseph discovered that many of the Iraqis knew some English even though they claimed they didn’t understand English:

That’s what we started to figure out eventually. They would pull up and we asked them ‘tehchee inglizchee?’ you know, do you speak English and they would say ‘la’ – no. But then when we talked to each other, they would visibly react to what we were saying, like they did understand us. So they knew more English than they let on.

During one eye-opening encounter, Joseph and his colleagues conducted a language experiment. They had stopped a bus of pilgrims and, as customary, the men and women
were separated once they were off the bus. Even though Joseph was not a designated squad and normally not authorized to speak with large groups of pilgrims, he was assigned to interview them. He believes that, because he looked of Arab origin to many Iraqis coupled with his proficiency with basic Arabic phrases, his colleagues felt Iraqis were more at ease with him. As he interviewed the Iraqi pilgrims, he asked them “Do you speak English?” and the Iraqis answered in English “No, I don’t speak any English at all, sorry.” He was assisted by a fellow marine who off-handedly made a joke. The joke incorporated slang and an American pop-culture reference. The entire group of Iraqis laughed at the joke. They understood the American pop-cultural reference as well as the slang term. As the laughter died down, many of the Iraqis congratulated Joseph’s colleague on the hilarity and cleverness of the joke. All the Iraqis were using English. It was then that Joseph realized how well the Iraqis knew English, even though they did not reveal it.

As with many US military personnel, Joseph’s unit had two to three translators, called ‘terps’ (short for ‘interpreter’) assigned to work with them as they fulfilled their job duties. Joseph recalled mainly good interactions with them. All of the interpreters Joseph encountered were Iraqis who had been hired by the US military. Some of the translators would attempt to teach some of the soldiers Arabic but it was not formal instruction. He stated that he wanted to learn the alphabet because there was graffiti on almost every building and even on some of the vehicles. However, there was no time in his schedule on a regular basis. Frequent transfers of the translators from one unit to the next made it difficult for Joseph to develop any close relationships with them. Though Joseph generally found the translators very helpful and informative, he noted though that
sometimes there seemed to be discrepancies between what Joseph perceived and what the translators conveyed:

There were some times with the ‘terps [interpreters] that there was more going on with some people and they didn’t tell you what it was. I don’t think it was like they were doing anything bad, but there was just something I could sense wasn’t right. I mean, after like a few thousand car searches and interviews, you kind of get a feel for a normal Iraqi family or normal Iraqi bus driver… stuff like that. And so sometimes when a truck or car would come there, there was just like something going on there and you couldn’t ever find out what it was.

I asked Joseph if he thought knowing Arabic more proficiently would have alerted him to the knowledge gap in some of these searches and interviews. He definitely felt if he had known Arabic, he would have understood enough without relying on a translator to investigate questionable situations. However, Joseph conceded that even knowing Arabic would not have solved the entire communication issue:

Well, even in America, if someone’s committing a crime, the police have trouble figuring it out as it is. So, put in there the language-thing or even the cultural stuff, and its going to make your job three times as hard. They aren’t going to tell you they’re carrying weapons and stuff like that, so you have to rely on your intuition and stuff. Knowing Arabic better would maybe get rid of some of the problems figuring out what is intuition and what is just language.

Joseph’s post-deployment education, experiences, & motivation

Joseph began taking Arabic language courses soon after re-enrolling in college. He stated that he would like to study abroad sometime if possible but wasn’t sure if his personal situation would allow it. After he decided to return to college, he majored in Middle East history with a focus on Islamic history. Joseph also expressed interest in learning about Islamic military history, but needed to understand ALC before continuing with Islamic history classes. Joseph believes his status in the marines as an Individual Ready Reserve Officer (IRR) has helped him put career goals into focus while paying for
his tuition. He was able to maintain his school schedule and fulfill his military obligations as an IRR officer.

His main motivation for learning Arabic was to become proficient enough to work in a job using ALC. When he described himself again as ‘not a language person,’ I asked him to define what he meant by that and he said that he didn’t believe he was someone who learned languages easily. In spite of his lack of confidence, the classroom observation data revealed that he participated often and completed all necessary activities required and that are ascribed to good language learners. He had learned the alphabet. He also went through his pictures from Iraq and tried to identify and translate all the Arabic words in his photos.

Joseph eventually enrolled in a two-month summer intensive Arabic course. He said that he found the class difficult and fast paced, but he felt he was learning a lot from the class. At that time, he felt strongly that his experiences in Iraq influenced his decision to learn more Arabic, but he had decided not continue past the intermediate level. He knew that this decision could negatively impact his chances for a government job, but he was enjoying his Middle East history classes more than the language classes. He wanted to focus more on the required history classes for his major. He was concerned that the time spent on ALC would detract from his major. In order to become proficient, Joseph believed that he would have to devote time to a study abroad program because he wasn’t learning enough in his classes to get a job using the language. In general, Joseph enjoyed his Arabic classes and enjoyed the interactions with the students, but felt that a lot of the work they did outside of class was “busy work.” Elaborating, Joseph described “busy work” as all the homework and exercises from the textbook. He did not believe he was
learning authentic Arabic and could not, for instance, understand the Arabic newscasts that he watched on the computer. However, he wanted to continue with Arabic, possibly after graduation when he could devote more time to it. Joseph expressed emphatically that his experiences in Iraq were what motivated him to study the language.

I asked Joseph if he felt his attitudes about Arabic language and culture had changed since he started taking coursework. Joseph stated that, given some of the things he had learned in class and remembering what had happened while he was deployed to Iraq, he now had a different perspective. However, he didn’t remember having any set opinions about ALC before he was deployed so he couldn’t say with certainty how drastically his attitudes and perceptions had changed over time. He did feel much more informed about the history of the region after taking Middle Eastern history classes and learned how the rich and complex history of the region colored all aspects of the peoples’ daily lives. Looking back at his encounters, he could put them in the context of what he learned in his Middle East history classes.

Joseph’s Summary

Joseph’s interest in learning ALC grew from his first intercultural interaction, which nearly resulted in disaster because of his language deficiency. He believed that his experiences in Iraq contributed to his motivation to continue learning ALC, even outside of the classroom setting. Joseph did not relate any negative intercultural interactions and was able to recognize cultural stereotypes in his pre-deployment briefing. After deployment, Joseph seemed to have had difficulty in relating to the Arabic that he was learning the formal classroom. He stated that he would continue to learn Arabic after
college, but would not take Arabic classes beyond the intermediate level, because he wasn’t gaining enough proficiency to justify the time he spent.

Joseph’s commitment to continuing to learn Arabic after college suggested that he was motivated for more reasons than career aspirations. At the time of his second interview, Joseph was reflecting increasingly on his intercultural interactions in Iraq in light of the historical contexts he was studying in college classes. He was recognizing how the history of the region was manifest in the daily life of the Iraqis. He had come to believe that gaining proficiency in the Arabic language could expand his knowledge enough to put into perspective his cultural interactions. He now could better understand the dynamics of relationships between men and women, and among families.

Emergent Themes

Overview

As the interviews of the nineteen participants progressed in the course of this research study, the variety and depth of experiences of these veterans made it difficult to encapsulate and compartmentalize. However, the research data revealed a spectrum of experience that can be generalized into four common themes, which emerge from the entire participant data collected in the study. These four main themes relate to the research questions in that they; 1) reveal commonalities in the veterans’ motivations for learning ALC post-deployment, 2) reveal commonalities in the types of intercultural interactions experienced by these veterans, and 3) help in identifying recurrent affective variables in these veterans’ language learning experiences. The following discussion describes and explains these four themes using the context of the veterans’ linguistic and
intercultural interactions while they were deployed and subsequent classroom experiences post-deployment. What follows is a cross-case analysis of the data that emerged from all 19 participants’ narratives. Table 4.3 identifies each theme and provides a brief explanation of the commonalities in veteran experiences that led to identifying these themes.
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<th>Commonalities of Veteran Experience</th>
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<td>• Use of English, non-verbal communication, cultural communication issues</td>
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Table 4.3: Emergent Themes and the Veteran Experience
The emergent themes act as common benchmarks in the veterans’ experiences and contribute to the context they bring to their classrooms. Context influences the students’ learning processes and their beliefs and perceptions about what is being learned so it follows that the context brought to the classroom by this minority group of students affects the learning of other students as well (Omaggio, 1986 & Alosh, 1997). Veterans are a minority group of students whose past experience becomes an integral part of the classroom context. Every veteran who participated in the study stated unequivocally that their experiences in Iraq and the Middle East influenced their decision to take classes in ALC. Close examination of the themes, as indicators of language motivation and other affective variables, could suggest valuable ways of capitalizing on veteran experiences in the classroom. The following sections are discussions of how these themes are manifested in post-deployment language learning motivation and other affective variables in the language learning process.

Language Factor

Generally, at the beginning of their deployments, the veterans stated that the language barrier posed no problems to accomplishing their daily tasks. Many job duties involved repetitive use of the same terms that were easily learned and memorized. Some veterans experienced minimal exposure to the local Iraqi population so communication with them was unnecessary. Others found that most of the Iraqi’s knew some English so they were able to combine the Iraqis’ limited knowledge with hand-signals in order to communicate effectively. Regardless of the range of exposure, the veterans seemed to be in agreement that initially the language barrier didn’t pose any problems in accomplishing their daily tasks, whether the tasks involved intercultural interactions with
Iraqis or not. One veteran, Travis, who worked daily with local Iraqi officials while he was deployed, believed that the language barrier was a non-issue in the first six months of his tour:

We spent a lot of time working together and at first there was a lot of hand motioning and pointing. After a while, the work was so routine that we all just knew what we had to do and we did it.

Another veteran believed that the language barrier didn’t pose a problem in accomplishing his daily tasks because by the time he had been deployed to the region, the Iraqis were accustomed to having American troops there. Many Iraqis had already learned enough English to know what to do when they went through a military checkpoint. As Zach explained:

Well, by the time I got there, we’d been there for four years, so I think they [the Iraqis] just knew what they were supposed to do when they came up to our safety checkpoint. They knew what we wanted to see in their cars. The women knew they had to go to one side of the road for searches, and the men knew where they were supposed to go.

While joking with colleagues in English, Joseph (case narrative provided above) realized that many of the Iraqis, who had heard them, understood the joke because they laughed at it. Another veteran reported that when he gave commands in English at critical moments, the Iraqis seemed to understand exactly what he was saying. One veteran believed that most Iraqis knew English even though they didn’t reveal their proficiency to American troops. As this veteran spent more time amongst Iraqi locals while securing some of the outlying villages, he became suspicious that some of the locals listened to the English conversations. Richard especially noted the children’s knowledge of English slang words and African-American vernacular:

Like when we came up to this one town. It was out in the middle of nowhere. We could’ve been in Syria or Iran or something if it weren’t for
our GPS. All these kids came rushing up and they were calling us ‘hommies’ and stuff. Because my buddy and I were black, they called us ‘SnoopDogg’. I wasn’t offended or anything but we were all wondering what was going on. These guys didn’t even have stoves, but they knew about SnoopDogg and they knew about ‘home-boy’ and stuff like that. Sometimes it was really eerie, because I’m sure none of us would know something like that about them.

In fact, several veterans noticed that there seemed to be a subtle, undetectable network of communication between the Iraqi towns. Quinn, an American soldier somewhat proficient in Arabic, provided a striking example of the communication ‘grapevine’ encountered when he traveled through remote Iraqi towns. In his interview, Quinn stated that he didn’t understand how news of his ability to speak Arabic could have traveled from one town to the next within hours. When he arrived in a small town in Iraq, he spoke some broken Arabic with one of the village elders. He had learned through some of his classes in college that it was appropriate and respectful to speak to a village elder. When he had identified the village elder, he received permission from his commanding officer to communicate with him. In the event he had trouble, the unit’s translator went with him. After a brief and friendly conversation with the Iraqi man, his unit received immediate orders to move into the next town. When they arrived within an hour in the next town, an elderly man was waiting for them and told the translator that he had heard some American soldiers knew Arabic in this particular unit. Quinn noted:

Yeah, I wanted to see if I could talk to some of these people since we weren’t searching or anything so I just said, hey can I go and talk to some of these guys. The CO said it was fine but I had to take a translator with me. I guess he didn’t want me to cause some kind of international problem or something. So we went up, and I guess the translator knew who I should talk to so he [the translator] introduced me to this guy and we talked a little bit. He asked how I knew so much Arabic and I said I was studying it. He was like really happy. I mean really happy about it too. Then we got orders and we had to leave real quick… I can’t remember why, something with a convoy or something… so we get to this
other town and there’s this old guy waiting for us. And he was like waving and the CO went up with the translator. Later they told me that they were hearing about some soldier speaking Arabic and stuff. It was kind of weird. Maybe they got on their cell phones and called the next town right a way. But it was wild. Everyone was like what the ----? So I guess they were glad.

Alissa’s (profile provided above) had a similar experience with her nickname. A few months after the Iraqi children on the base that had nicknamed her ‘basoonah’ (“kitten”), she visited a town where many of the children called her by the same name while she attempted to speak Arabic with them. She was perplexed since she didn’t believe any Iraqi family from her base had traveled to that area.

With few exceptions, each veteran initially described language as a non-issue to completing tasks and fulfilling their military obligations in Iraq. However, eventually, during the course of their deployments, they reported that language emerged as a significant obstacle. The language became a barrier at critical moments involving issues ranging from safety and intelligence gathering to attempts at establishing personal connections and developing relationships with local Iraqis.

For example, Lawrence discovered during deployment that the language barrier was a detriment to his assigned mission, which was to “win the hearts and minds of the Iraqi people.” He elaborated that his position required various outreach activities to local community members in order to improve daily relations between the Army as a whole and local Iraqis. He discovered that many Iraqis who were in regular contact with the Army understood some English. He attempted to use some of the basic greetings and phrases that he had learned on his own as well as some from the communication cards that were provided to his unit. Iraqis responded positively to his use of the language, which made him want to become more proficient. He also felt a personal responsibility
to break any possible stereotypes that Iraqis had of African-Americans. However, there were few translators in Lawrence’s area, which complicated attempts to make in-depth communication:

I was always trying to use some Arabic because it just made people really happy. I also kind of wanted them not to think all of us [African-American soldiers] were one way. They had like all these movies and music that was just like rap and showed stuff from the city. I was trying to make them see how we were kind of the same. You know, how I knew about goats and stuff… maybe not goats, but stuff like that. But it was real hard, because once I said hello and stuff; they’d be like talking really fast, thinking I understood them. But then I didn’t and I needed a translator. Most of the time, the translator was busy with more important stuff than just socializing. But I thought the socializing part was important because we were supposed to win their hearts and minds. You can’t really do that with just English.

Eventually, the in-depth interview data revealed that every veteran participant experienced frustration with the language barrier. Even though the language barrier had not interfered with their daily tasks, it caused a threat to their personal safety as well as to the safety of Iraqi civilians. Eighteen of the nineteen participants in this study related an intercultural interaction that created language-based frustration. Brent (profiled above) had experienced frustration, waiting hours for a translator when an elderly Iraqi woman attempted to warn his unit about an insurgent ambush a few blocks from their position. In another incident, while under heavy fire from insurgents, Anthony attempted to get an Iraqi family to safety and could not because of the language barrier. Other veterans experienced similar anxious situations caused by language barrier.

Travis had come across what he believed to be an improvised explosive device (IED). In attempting to warn his Iraqi Army colleagues, he tried to describe the device’s appearance so that they could exercise caution when approaching it. Even though Travis
had learned as much Iraqi dialect as possible, he did not know enough vocabulary to
describe the device or its location:

I was really trying to tell this guy and I was using every word I could
possibly get from my head. It would have been funny if it hadn’t been so
dangerous. All I could say was ‘left, on the left’ or ‘right’ so he just didn’t
understand. And since it was an IED, we didn’t know, it could go any
time. So I got my CO over there and he ordered a translator. After that
we had some kind of translator with us all the time.

In another example, one veteran, Cameron, had come across documents that he
believed were important to the intelligence gathering effort of his platoon. He was
instructed by his commanding officer to take the documents to their translator, another
military officer, to verify their authenticity before sending them to headquarters to be
analyzed. The translator was unable to translate the Arabic to English so Cameron was
still unclear as to the authenticity and importance of the document. Therefore, they could
not forward the materials to headquarters. Cameron began to question the abilities of
their translator. The documents could very well have been authentic and the lack of
salient intelligence crippled attempts at accurate analyses. He began to wonder how
many documents the translator had labeled inauthentic when they were authentic.

Lack of pre-deployment cultural orientation contributed to tragic events according
to a number of veterans who took part in the study. One unit suffered heaving casualties
when they were attacked multiple times, because insurgents known for allegiance to
Saddam Hussein held one town they were reconnoitering. In the focus group interview,
those veterans partially blamed the extensive losses on lack of ALC understanding and
knowledge. Quinn reflected:

You know, the first time we were over there, we just had no idea what the
hell was going on. Some of the time you could tell something was up, like
of people in the town were all inside and not coming out to see you. But
most of the time you just didn’t know who to talk to and you got a
different story all the time. The first time around, we didn’t have
translators or anything, so I’m amazed we were even getting anything
done at all.

And Richard observed:

I definitely noticed more translators the second time around that we were
there. The first time, we just knew we were going to get into it and when
it started happening… I mean, it's a bad situation even if everyone knows
the same language, but that just made it worse.

Of particular interest is that, of those participating in this focus group interview, three of
them have either majored or minored in Arabic language in college since deployment.

Having studied Arabic to the intermediate-advanced levels of proficiency in college
before returning to Iraq, Quinn had some interesting insights in his final interview
relating to the language:

Like, all the work I put into Arabic and everything I learned from the
translators the second time around, I just wonder how much we missed the
first time. If there was stuff there that we missed because none of us really
knew the language. There was that one suspect translator, and then all the
stuff in the mosque and maybe there were all kinds of signs, like what
people were saying on the streets and we didn’t even catch it. Sometimes
I wonder if it was different if we did catch it.

His reflections were particularly insightful when considering what these veterans may
have suffered because of the language barrier.

Role of the translators

This qualitative study would be incomplete without examining some specific
affects translators, or interpreters, usually referred to as ‘terps’ by military personnel,
have on the intercultural and linguistic experiences of the research participants. Data
revealed that whether translators were local Iraqi contractors or paid military personnel,
the veterans had affecting interactions with them. The translators became mediators for
intercultural contact with the Iraqis and often played the role of instructors in ALC. In fact, the interpreters had such an impact on veteran experiences that relationships with interpreters became a sub-question in the interviews. It is acknowledged that a broad review of translators’ roles in the military is outside the scope of this study, but it became evident that certain reoccurring interactions with translators were salient.

All 19 participants had interactions with interpreters. One affecting role of interpreters was that of instructor, teaching them Arabic words and phrases as well as explaining cultural elements. Quinn and Richard spent a lot of time working with two translators who helped them improve their Arabic. By the end of their second deployment, Quinn had studied Arabic formally to the intermediate – advanced level and Richard to the basic – intermediate level. Both returned from Iraq with an collection of educational materials provided to them by their unit’s Jordanian translators. The following summer, they went to Jordan to live with the families of those same translators. Both have continued their Arabic studies at the college level. Their experience exemplifies the impact of translator influences on just two of these veterans. Below is a summary of the translator impact on all nineteen participants in Figure 4.2.
There is a broad range of roles that translators/interpreters played. The summary in Figure 4.2 cannot and does not reflect the breadth and complexity of the relationships and experiences veterans had with their military translators/interpreters. However, certain perceptions of the translators/interpreters repeatedly emerged from the interviews. Thirteen out of the nineteen participants had extensive interactions with translators/interpreters while they were stationed in Iraq. Of those thirteen, six veterans reported that they mis-trusted the intentions, activities, and information that they were given from the translators while they were in the field and while on the base. Four of the participants having extensive contact expressed semi-trustworthy language when describing the translators. Examples of their skepticism are phrases such as “in it for the money” or “always selling something,” but they did not directly express any suspicions about the linguistic or cultural information that they received from them. Three of those having extensive interactions trusted the translators and trusted the linguistic and cultural information they received from them. Six of the 19 participants had a limited interactions
with the translators – four out of the six trusted the translators’ information and two did not. However, it is curious all nineteen participants reported that they learned a great deal about Arabic dialects and Arabic culture from the translators/interpreters, because it somewhat contradicts the belief that the information they received from them in their role as translators/interpreters was unreliable. It is possible that when the translators were acting in the role of teacher, the veterans had more trust in them than when they were doing their job as a translator/interpreter. The data suggest the primary operative role that translators/interpreters filled for these veterans was that of an ALC teacher.

*Lack of Cultural & Linguistic Orientation*

A second theme that emerged from the data is the lack of cultural and linguistic orientation. This phrase refers to veterans’ descriptions of their lack of academic background in the Middle East, lack of practical knowledge about their intercultural experiences, and lack of pre-deployment preparation in ALC. Post-deployment, many participants had difficulty putting their experiential knowledge into context in the academic setting. The length of pre-deployment training in ALC for the participants of this study ranges from zero training to two weeks. The veterans, who received the maximum amount of training, two weeks, were taught only basic elements of ALC. One veteran referred to the language he learned as Mission Essential Phrases (MEP), a term referring to basic words and phrases used to accomplish basic tasks in searching homes and vehicles and obtaining identity information.

Most of the veterans received materials in a variety of forms to be used in translation. Some were given translation cards, which were small foldout cards imprinted
with Arabic phrases, accompanied by transliteration and translation of those phrases. Some participants were also provided audio materials, which used the audio-lingual method to teach basic Arabic words and phrases. Other veterans had access to and used a popular commercial, computer-based language learning program that taught vocabulary and sentence structure. When asked about how much they remembered from these materials, nearly all confessed they didn’t recall the vocabulary and phrases from the materials. Most of their recall came from their post deployment ALC classes. Apparently, the popular computer program did not provide an appropriate cultural context for the use of these phrases and words. In fact, there was almost no cultural information at all. However, in-depth analysis was not conducted, as the materials’ relevance to this study is negligible.

Jacob had been deployed within the first six months of the US-led invasion of Iraq and was assigned to a unit that worked at a large vehicle checkpoint outside of Baghdad. He had had high test results on the DLAB\(^2\), so he was given a translation card and tasked with being the translator or interrogator for his unit. Unfortunately, the card did not help him because it only included English transliteration of the phrases and not the Arabic equivalent. Later, he realized that the translations of some phrases were incorrect. Jacob felt helpless in the situation and it became a joke in his squad that he was considered the translator because fellow soldiers had learned the same phrases from locals and were just as, if not more than, successful in communication:

After a while, I just thought they gave the translator, or interrogator, that’s what they called me at first, job because someone didn’t like me or

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\(^2\) The DLAB or Defense Language Aptitude Battery is a standardized test commonly used by the US military that measures a person's ability to de-code language. It is generally used to identify individuals that have a proficiency in learning new languages. However, its effectiveness has varied results and more research is needed to prove its accuracy.
something. The card they gave us was a joke. Most of the locals could speak some English but they couldn’t really read it and they didn’t even know what to think of the transliterated part – you know, the part where they spell out the Arabic in English and you’re supposed to say it and then everyone magically understands you. Well, none of that was working. Some of the guys were learning from the kids too, after a while so that helped and people understood them better because they were learning the ammiyyah [dialect] and the card was all in standard anyway. Our sergeant just got permission to hire the base janitor to come out with us and work on translation eventually because me being the whole translator thing was just a joke. And now, I’m trying to learn this stuff in class and I’m still bad at it!

Jacob’s experience was not unique. Not only did the participants report being unprepared in the language, but they also reported that their understanding of the culture and political climate was inadequate to complete their overall missions.

Derek had just completed basic training when he received orders to deploy to Iraq two months later. Derek spent much of his time prior to his deployment reading news reports about the Middle East in an attempt to prepare himself for his impending travel to the region. He tried to read about current events but felt lost because he didn’t know the history or the religion of the region. Derek described only a brief mention of the Middle East in his high school social studies class:

I read one report where they were talking about Kurds or something and I thought it was in Europe. Then I was reading more and found out they were in Iraq.

Another veteran received two-hours of pre-deployment training that focused on the different religious groups and differences in the region. Brent felt that training became vital while deployed. Brent had also learned a little on his own before deployment about the differences between the Sunni and Shi’a in Iraq, but didn’t understand the politics that were an underlying factor in the conflict. In his two-hour pre-deployment training, a Sunni Muslim who also served in the armed forces gave a brief
historical overview of the Sunni and the differences between the Sunni and Shi’a. However, the political influence that Iran had with the Shi’a sects in Iraq was not made clear. When Brent arrived in Iraq, the Iraqi Shi’a leader Muqtada Al-Sadr was causing problems in building a coalition government in Iraq. Brent, having no knowledge of the historical basis of Sunni and Shi’a political and religious tensions, was confused by the enmities between the groups. He had observed that the two sects ate the same food, spoke the same language, and had the same family values. Their stubbornness about communicating with each other forced one of the military commanders to have to act as a diplomatic messenger between the two areas of the city. Brent believed that understanding the underlying political context of the conflict would have helped his unit to negotiate between the two groups.

Half of the veteran participants wrestled with issues that arose from entrenched cultural perspectives of gender. Alissa, the female participant in this research study, believed that the Iraqi and Kuwaiti men, working as translators, treated women poorly. As described in her participant profile, she and her female colleagues were subjected to a very uncomfortable situation in an apartment during her trip with the Kuwaiti translators to Kuwait City. She expressed anger and frustration over how these Arab men treated her and it seemed to affect her attitude towards all the translators she encountered. Having spent time with some of the Iraqi families on the base, she knew what appropriate and inappropriate Arab male behavior with women was and saw these Kuwaiti interpreters deliberately exploiting their perceived American ignorance of these cultural behaviors in order to take advantage of female American military personnel. Being a woman allowed her to interact with more of the Iraqi women than the male soldiers could at the base and
she came to believe that Iraqi society was very brutal for women. She expressed special concern for a young disabled woman she met on the base. Her perception was that women were valued only as child bearers:

No one would marry her or they couldn’t marry her to anyone. I always wonder about her, she probably got sold into prostitution or something because that’s what happens to a lot of women there when they aren’t married or the families can’t care for them any more.

Travis experienced similar discomfort with the different cultural gender milieu when he and an interpreter discussed the topic of homosexuality. Travis believed he had accidentally discovered that two of the Iraqi’s working with them were actually in a homosexual relationship. However, when he discussed this possibility with the translator, Travis was told that there were no homosexuals in Iraq and that Americans mistake normal affection between men to be homosexual in nature. The translator went on to explain that no Iraqi would engage in homosexuality, because it is against Islam. Travis doubted the translator’s explanation, feeling that the translator was deliberately misleading, maybe to protect the Iraqis whom Travis had suspected, fearing retribution from American military. Possibly, the translator was just embarrassed that Travis had discovered the relationship:

It was pretty clear to me what was going on. I mean, the guys were together. But later on, the ‘terp [interpreter] looked really embarrassed and he said that there wasn’t any homosexuals in Iraq since it wasn’t a Muslim-thing. He was saying that American soldiers just thought holding hands and stuff like that meant they were homosexual, but I know what I saw. Whatever, I didn’t really care, but I just thought they’d be more discrete about it if they were. It was like, I was American, so I wasn’t supposed to know.

Later, Travis realized that his lack of knowledge about cultural sexual taboos had caused an uncomfortable, awkward situation. Every single veteran recounted an experience
involving gender issues without specifically being asked about cultural gender norms. With gender norms appearing so conspicuously in their intercultural interactions, it is reasonable to assume that the gender issues influenced the participants’ motivations, but the extent of influence is difficult to measure.

It is evident in the case narratives that lack of orientation among the veterans created many moments of culture shock. Most of the veterans recounted these moments, as expressed in the interviews, in a light-hearted and humorous way. So, even though some of the culture-shock moments were very uncomfortable, as in the case of Travis, or even frightening, as with Alissa’s experience, all the veterans seemed to believe that the culture shock they experienced was related to their ignorance of Arabic culture and history. Not only were the veterans unprepared linguistically, they were uninformed culturally as well.

**Perspective Change**

The research participants recounted very clearly in the interviews perspective changes that occurred as their experience with and knowledge of ALC grew. In accordance with Contact Hypothesis (Allport, 1954), the degree of perspective change seems to be directly proportional to the amount of intercultural contact they experienced. The perspective changes were related to language, culture, and politics. None of the participants had a high school background in ALC or Middle East history and they mentioned this fact unsolicited in the interviews. Several participants had attempted to educate themselves before they were deployed but it is clear that, regardless of the amount of their exposure to the Middle East prior to deployment, they did not get much
helpful education about the Middle East, its languages or cultures. The theme emerged as
the participants recounted in interviews their intercultural and linguistic experiences
while deployed and unsolicited discussions arose on how their perspectives had changed
about the Middle East in general because of their deployment.

Some veterans had perspective changes about the Arabic language itself. Jacob
had taken a lot of Spanish classes at a university prior to his deployment and had near-
native fluency in Spanish. As previously stated, he scored well on the military language
test – the DLAB and became a translator for his unit in Iraq. Initially, these factors made
Jacob believe that learning Arabic in the classroom would not be as challenging for him
as it would be for other students. However, Jacob had discontinued taking Arabic at the
time of his second interview. He had found that Arabic was too hard for him to learn in
the classroom. When he began taking Arabic, he described feeling lost and the language
had no organization to it that he could perceive. Jacob did find benefit in knowing some
of the alphabet and some of the phrases because he believed it helped him understand his
linguistic experiences during his deployment:

Yeah, well, I was so bad as a linguist and I had high scores on my tests. I
was just baffled. I mean, I really like the Arabic class, but I just couldn’t
see the grammar and stuff like Spanish… But I’m glad I took the three
classes that I did because I kind of figured out what I was doing wrong
when I was [translating] in Iraq. Like I know where ‘qif’ comes from now
and why I say ‘shuku maku’ and stuff like that. A lot of good it does me
now though…

Most of the veterans perceived Arabic to be a very hard language to learn. And
many described themselves as non-language learners. It is difficult to give an exact
definition of this term, but generally, I took this description to mean that they perceived
their foreign language learning skills to be weak. However, a few of them seemed to
change their minds once they started learning the language and understanding some of the words and phrases used in everyday interactions.

Travis had this experience as he started memorizing the words and phrases from his translation / communication cards. He began carrying around a piece of paper to record additional words and phrases that were of importance. He reported that the more he wrote down, the more he remembered. His difficulties with the language came when he began learning the Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) taught in college:

Iraqi was really easy and after a while everyone could understand me. Then I started taking classes and I’d use the same stuff I learned in the Iraq and the teacher looked at me like I was from Mars.

Quinn found that knowing MSA helped him decipher meaning from the dialect he heard. Once the translators/interpreters knew he studied formal Arabic, they began giving him reading assignments to translate into English. The translators seemed very impressed by his proficiency in MSA and his translator gave him increasingly difficult translations throughout his deployment. Quinn enjoyed the challenge and the notoriety that came with his proficiency in MSA:

Well, once they knew I could read and write in Fusha [MSA], this older translator fellow from Jordan started writing stories down and giving them to me to translate. It would take me a day or so to figure it out, then I’d give it back to him. He was really nice about it and I think he had even taught Arabic in Jordan at one point. He was really impressed that I knew all the verb forms and grammar like that. Most of the other translators didn’t even know that stuff. So, once they knew I could figure all that stuff out, they were always asking me about what form a word was and stuff like that. It also helped me figure out the dialect words because even though they say they don’t use Fusha in any of that, they do.

Regardless of whether or not the Arabic language became more difficult or less difficult for them as they studied formally in the classroom, all seemed to have a motivation to learn it.
Most veterans reported that they either knew nothing about the Middle East prior to deployment or they had negative perspectives on ALC. Some regarded I as killers and terrorists. Others knew that this perspective was too stereotypical, but felt conflicted because of the September 11th, 2001 attacks. Malcom, for example, prior to his deployment believed that there was a war with Islam and it was our duty to defend our country and others from a growing Islamo-fascist insurgency. However, after his deployment, he changed his perspectives on the situation. He believed that it was strategically necessary to pacify Iraq so that we could have access to oil in the region. He attributed this perspective shift to his experiences in Iraq and Middle East history classes. His opinion about I had changed after he began taking Arabic language classes. Before deployment, and even during deployment, he did not believe that it was possible to have a personal relationship with a Muslim. However, he had met several Muslims in his Middle East history classes and they became colleagues. So his opinions about personal relationships with Muslims had changed.

In contrast, Zach related in his first interview that he didn’t believe much of the stereotypical portrayals of I and the Middle East in the media. However, during his deployment, he stated that he witnessed the source of many cultural behaviors from which those stereotypes arose. He had no prior ALC training nor did he have any classes on Middle East or Islamic history. He described himself as liberal in his views of other cultures prior to his deployment, but after deployment and after some ALC classes, he described himself as more cynical about other cultures. Upon elaboration, Zach stated that he had a more realistic attitude towards I, Islam, and the Middle East. He still believed that stereotypes were definitely wrong because you could not generalize a whole
group based on the behavior of a few, but Zach felt that while deployed he witnessed behaviors that reinforced some of the negative Arab stereotypes:

It was all relative. It’s hard to hate your enemy when you don’t know who the enemy is. It’s not the kind of war they tell you about in boot camp. So I was like these people aren’t so bad at first, then once I met like hundreds of them and saw them act like the ones on TV or just be total *expletive*, then I was like, okay, some of them are like that. But really, its probably somewhere in between I guess. There’s like the average everyday Iraqi out there and you may never see him.

Many of the veterans interviewed (approximately 14 out of the 19) for this research study had similar views to Zach. They did not believe any of the stereotypes perpetuated by a large portion of the media. They approached these portrayals with skepticism. However, after their deployments to Iraq, veterans saw that some stereotypical portrayals had some validity. Even when negative stereotypes were confirmed, they were not deterred from pursuing ALC coursework in college.

The most profound perspective changes came from Quinn and Richard, who reported that before deploying for the first time, they believed their attitudes and perspectives towards Middle Eastern people were extremely negative. Both described their pre-deployment opinions as ignorant and hostile. Quinn’s opinion began to change when he came into contact with Iraqi families while searching their homes. He was impressed by their hospitality:

I used to think they were all people that we were supposed to kill, like I’m going to go over and ‘get some’ [slang for engaging in combat]. I mean, that’s what the military taught us at first anyway and that’s what we’d joke around about all the time, well, not joke but just brag or something. But then they were also saying that like some of them needed to be protected. I just wasn’t really knowledgeable about their situation. So we would go into these homes and people wouldn’t have anything at all. They’d still give us food and stuff. Like tea and bread, or some cookie-things…

Richard expressed a similar change:
I was pretty much the same way. Then I started learning the language because we really got our *expletive* kicked the first time around and so I was talking more to some of the people and all that. I guess if I lived there, I’d be *expletive* angry too.

Both of them believed their perspectives on I, Arabic language, Arabic culture and politics to have shifted “almost one hundred and eighty degrees.” In fact, during the second focus-group interview, both were preparing to go on a self-funded study abroad program in Jordan. They planned to stay with some of the Jordanian translators that they met while deployed for the second time in Iraq.

Overall, all the veterans experienced a shift in their perspective about the Arabic language, Arabic culture and the political situation in Iraq. There were varying degrees of this shift from the very slight to a complete rearrangement of perspective. Discussion of their attitudes toward ALC seemed to open up the discussions to their larger perspective changes. The shifts in perspectives are directly proportional to the amount of direct contact that these veterans had with Iraqi nationals.

*Formal language learning experiences post-deployment*

All the veterans in this research project have studied Arabic to varying levels in order to qualify as participants. The final emerging theme under discussion is the veterans’ language learning experiences post-deployment. The participants took ALC courses in a formal classroom setting in an institution of higher education. Of the nineteen participants, thirteen expressed a desire to minor in the language as a part of their bachelor’s degree program and three participants decided to major in the language.
This theme emerged unexpectedly as interviews progressed because the participants reported that classroom experiences seemed to illuminate and bring into focus their experiences in Iraq. Most participants believed that learning about ALC seemed to help them process their past experiences and make sense of them. It seemed to have a similar function as a debriefing. In the interviews, we did not discuss in detail exactly how or why they believed taking classes helped them to understand better the veteran experience. This aspect of the data has significant research implications, which will be discussed in Chapter Five as an implication for further research. It is outside the scope of this study to determine if there are psychological benefits for veterans taking formal education coursework that focuses on the area in which they were deployed, yet it is an interested phenomenon.

The illumination that they described in their interviews took a variety of forms. For example, with regard to the language, many were able to decipher the Arabic dialect that they had heard while deployed when they learned about certain concepts in their Arabic language classes. Cameron elaborated:

> Before I knew about the verbs and the different kinds – like the weak verbs especially, I didn’t know how the hell you got qif for ‘stop.’ I looked it up, and qif meant stop but then I couldn’t understand why sometimes they said qiffee and sometimes just qif. So the day came in class when we conjugated waqafa (‘to stop’) completely, from the past tense to the command form. Then I was like ‘oh! That’s how you get that and that’s why there’s a difference!’ All that time, like four years, I was wondering that and I had to wait until four hundred level Arabic for it to actually make sense!

Travis had a similar classroom experience:

> Even though we’re learning a totally different kind of Arabic in class, I’m starting to see where the similarities are with the Amiyyah (dialect) that I learned there. Just some pronunciation differences and small grammar stuff; like we said aanee for ‘I’ in Iraq and anaa for ‘I’ in class.
Formal coursework also helped some veterans to process the political situation in which they were playing an integral role in Iraq. For some, like Malcom, illumination helped them to assign new meaning to their entire experience. Even though Malcom still wasn’t sure if Saddam Hussein played a role in September 11th, the ideas he absorbed from scholarly publications he read in his history and military history courses led him to believe that there were a number of important reasons for the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq.

He developed strong convictions that our military presence and the establishment of US bases in the region were vital to our national security. While he maintained the integrity of his original reasons for joining the military and he continued to believe that his actions in Iraq directly related to US national security, Malcom was able to broaden his perspective through his coursework. Connor had similar experiences with perspective change:

I just felt that the two groups we were trying to get to work together would just find excuses not to work together. It made the whole thing really hard because it was kind of like negotiating with four year olds. So, then in our Middle East studies class AND in our Arabic class, like on the same day in fact, we learned about the Sunni-Shia divide. And I just knew I was right the whole time, and so was our Commanding Officer. These guys were never going to get along.

Overall, the veteran participants reported very positive intercultural interactions with the students and faculty in their Arabic language classes. Though eleven of the nineteen participants felt that there was hostility toward them in their ALC from the heritage students and sometimes from their teachers, on only one occasion in the three years of this study did I directly observe any open hostility toward a veteran from a heritage student and never directly observed any hostility from an Arabic instructor.

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3 This argument for establishing military bases is supported by prominent scholars in the fields of political science and history.
Generally, I observed a higher level of participation from the veteran students in their Arabic classes than that of non-veteran students.

Finally, it is relevant to note all the participants who enrolled in formal language learning are taking advantage of the U.S. G.I. Bill to help fund their Arabic language education. As described in Chapter One, the U.S. G.I. Bill helps many pursue a college education when it may not otherwise be financially able. It is also significant that fifteen of the nineteen veterans participated in the Reserves program, which due to the obligations to the military, immediately places them in the category of non-traditional students. The data show that obtaining an education, even one paid for by the G.I. Bill and through the reservist program, can present unique challenges. In their interviews, some of the challenges could be classified as demotivational factors (Dornyei, 2003) in language learning. Among the challenges are basic funding issues. Many veterans could not pay for their college, support their families, and take on full time college coursework while devoting the amount of time necessary to learn Arabic. Sixteen of the nineteen respondents were in this predicament. Lawrence elaborated on his financial aide issues and their effect on his education:

I can’t just go to school; I have an apartment and got to have a car so then their insurance. Don’t get me wrong, the extra money is nice, but it’s not enough every month. So there’s like twenty hours a week that I can’t spend studying. I don’t have one of those cushy office jobs where I can study while I work. I can’t do work study because I got the G.I. Bill so that’s how it is.

Others experienced many problems with scheduling. One student had been given notice that he would be deployed within the next four months, so Quinn did not enroll for classes the following term. Four months passed and he had not received any orders to deploy, but it was too late to enroll for the current term. Still, without any additional
information, he enrolled for the next year’s term. Four weeks before the end of that term, he received orders to leave for Iraq and had to drop all of his classes:

Yeah, I was like okay, I’m going in like four months, I moved back in with my parents, got rid of my sweet apartment, dropped all my classes and I just worked for like a few months. Then I found out I wasn’t going. So registered for class and started taking classes again, got back into the groove. Since all I was taking were Arabic classes, I lost like all my Arabic in the few months I was working. So, I dropped down a level in the Arabic classes, was doing okay, then they’re like, your gonna leave in a month, so get ready. So I was like *expletive*! Then I had to drop the classes that I’d even dropped down a level in. Its taken me like six years to get my bachelor’s degree so far.

Many of the veteran reservist participants had the same complaints about scheduling, but found it difficult to explain these problems to their instructors. They felt they should drop their classes and should not bother their instructors with problems of deployments and training. Sam described his reasoning for dropping out of his Arabic class:

I didn’t want my Arabic teacher to think I was slacking off or something. So I just dropped. Then, I can just retake the class later.

In spite of deployment and scheduling problems, nine of the nineteen participants in this study have graduated with bachelor’s degrees.
Major Motivators and Other Affective Variables

All participants were asked about their main motivation for learning the Arabic language post-deployment. Table 4.4 gives a brief overview of their responses and classifies the types of motivation exhibited as defined by Dornyei (1996, 2003, & 2005).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant</th>
<th>Type of Motivation According to Dornyei (2003)</th>
<th>Answer to the interview question “Did your experiences in Iraq motivate you to learn Arabic in college?”</th>
<th>Answer to the questionnaire question “Why are you taking Arabic now?”</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alissa</td>
<td>Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Just interested in it for now; may want to teach it in the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony</td>
<td>Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Want to work with the language in the future</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Required for the Major to minor in Arabic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brandon</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Most likely will have to know it for a career in the military</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brent</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Will probably go back to the region someday and want to know what they're saying and communicate with locals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cameron</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Career in Intelligence; interesting language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conner</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Important language to learn; career in Intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Derek</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Just want to know the basics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jacob</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Know the alphabet; Like languages; Wanted to learn it, but was too hard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Important language; career in intelligence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lawrence</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>New kind of war requires that you speak their language; will probably go back to Iraq.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malcom</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Helps with the career path</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Michael</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Required for the Major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicholas</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Important and interesting language; required for the major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quinn</td>
<td>Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Love it; fun to learn</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Fun to know and speak with people; required for the major</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Liked using it with the locals and probably go back to Iraq</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Travis</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Not as hard as I thought; enjoy it; will probably go back to Iraq and it will be useful to know; won't rely on translators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zach</td>
<td>Instrumental/Integrative</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>May want a career in intelligence but it's a language that's good to know anyway</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Major Language Learning Motivators
Based on their responses in the questionnaire and based on the interview data, all the veterans believed that their experiences in Iraq influenced them and motivated them to take Arabic coursework at the college level. However, the types of motivation that are operational as defined by Dornyei seem to be mixed. In fact, for some it was difficult to categorize their motivation based on their responses. Some seemed to exhibit both instrumental and integrative motivation in their language learning. The following discussion examines these motivators in more detail.

*Integrative and Instrumental Motivation*

As indicated by the data, five participants exhibited purely instrumental reasons in their responses to why they were studying Arabic. And only two stated purely integrative reasons for studying Arabic. The rest of the respondents seemed to have a combination of both integrative and instrumental reasons for studying Arabic. These motivations were a mixed combination of goal-oriented and internalized reasoning, which combined instrumental motives such as taking the language for career goals, travel to the region, or to complete classroom tasks, with integrative motives such as saying that the language was important or that they would most likely use it in the future without a specific goal or purpose. Instrumental motivation focuses on the specific goals of the language learner as defined by Dornyei and Csizer (2005). Integrative motivation describes more internal psychological processes and attitudes that the language learner has about the target language (Dornyei, 2003). The veterans expressed both.

For example, Nicholas had no immediate plans to enter into a job search that incorporated his Arabic language and culture training (ALC) that he had received from
his college coursework, because he planned to remain in the military. He also was unsure if he would be deployed to Iraq again, but had received word from his commanding officer that he may go to Afghanistan. Even though knew Arabic was not spoken in Afghanistan, he was not deterred from continuing his ALC studies in college, because he believed his language skills in Arabic would be helpful. He explained:

Well, for right now, I like my classes and I have a really good teacher so I’m going to keep taking Arabic for now. Besides, I just started reading newspapers on my own with a dictionary. Even if I can use some Arabic in Afghanistan, I think that will look better for me than if I just expect everyone to know English all the time. I don’t know if I’ll get to use Arabic again, but it’s a real interesting language and I like the history and stuff like that. I’ll probably stick with it as long as I can.

With no specific goal or purpose in mind, it is reasonable to assume that their motivation is more than instrumental in nature. However, it is difficult to classify their motivation into just one of two categories. Therefore, with further study, it is appropriate to develop a classification that takes into account the language learners’ influences and previous experiences, as proposed by Norton (2000). This type of “influential motivation” may play a larger role in the classroom context than language professionals realize.

Other Affective Variables

As touched on in the section on the emergent themes, there seems to be other affective variables at work with these veterans and their language learning goals. Identifying all affective variables operative within the classroom context is difficult and is outside the scope of this study. However, it is pertinent to the research questions in
this study to mention some of the most obvious affective variables operating and discuss their relevance.

\textit{Attitude toward ALC}

Many of these veterans underwent an attitude change about the Arabic language and culture (ALC) based on their intercultural and linguistic experiences in Iraq. This change of attitude seems to have influenced their decisions to learn the language. All of them attributed their language learning interest to their experiences in Iraq. All but one of the nineteen participants continued learning the language regardless of its perceived difficulty. At some point, their attitude toward learning the language and learning about the culture outweighed the time investment and difficulty in learning the language. Thus their attitude motivated them to learn the language.

Sam explained that his attitude about learning a foreign language changed quite a bit after his experiences in Iraq.

Before I went over there, I didn’t really see the point. But I had a great time working with the kids in our outreach program and they were too young to know any English. Even that they tried to use some English with me, just, you know, made me feel like I should return the favor or something. Then I started thinking about all the people I know that have to learn English at some point and I was like ‘okay, why should they have to learn my language all the time? Why can’t I learn theirs?’

\textit{Illumination}

Another important affective variable that is largely unexplored with these veterans is the role that their formal education plays in helping them to sort out or make sense of the veteran experience. The term veteran experience refers the collective experiences, emotions, and activities – physical and psychological – that are common among all...
veterans. Many suffer psychological stress post-deployment. Whether or not clarification of their war experiences through the detachment of academic endeavors could help in lowering post-deployment stress has not been established. However, veterans’ clarifying experiences do seem to become part of the classroom context. In the language classroom, classroom context is vital to developing language proficiency and skills. It is possible that the context provided by this illumination factor is an as of yet untapped resource that can be used in language curriculum development. As one participant explained:

> Coming back here and learning about all this stuff just seemed like everything made more sense. I didn’t think knowing about all the complex society stuff and the history about the religion really made a difference on the ground at the time. But then in my International Studies class, we started talking about religion in daily life and I could see that, every day on the ground. I don’t know what a difference it would have made knowing all that while I was there, but at least I would have understood better at the time. It’s hard to explain, but like, I think everything means more when I’ve got more history behind it.

Another veteran experienced similar illumination on his second tour in Iraq. Between his first and second deployments, he took ALC classes at a local community college and a four-year institution. He believed that he made better decisions during his second deployment because he better understood the language and culture:

> It wasn’t like was fluent or anything when I went back over, and maybe it was just because I’d been there before, but it seemed like, I knew what to expect more when it came to interacting with people. I had to do that a lot the second time around. Maybe I knew more and that helped, or maybe the situation had gotten better between the first and second time around, but I really think that if you just try to understand what’s going on and just look at the situation like your following orders, you get a different idea, or maybe a clearer idea and it makes you do a better job.
Even though many of the veterans were vague about how this illumination worked to help them process their experiences in Iraq, it seems that learning about Arabic language and culture played a role in that processing. Their academic pursuits, post-deployment, shed light on what they experienced during deployment.

Summary

The previous discussion integrated data collected from nineteen veterans studying the Arabic language and culture (ALC) after their deployment to Iraq in order to identify motivating factors to learn Arabic and to analyze other possible affective variables in their language learning. The first section provided narrative analyses of a cross-section of these veterans to present a general picture of the veteran experience in Iraq as it relates to their linguistic and cultural interactions while deployed. All the veteran participants in this study experienced a change in their perceptions and beliefs about ALC, which influenced their decision to learn the language and culture in college. The participants came from a wide variety of backgrounds and education. However, they seemed to share common elements in their motivations to study the language and culture. Six detailed profiles of a cross-section of participant narratives, exemplify the diverse types of intercultural and linguistic experiences and the internal perception changes that occurred within all 19 the veterans.

There followed a discussion of themed that emerged from their descriptions of their pre-deployment training, their intercultural interactions, and the issues surrounding their post deployment ALC training. Four major emergent themes recurred with each
veteran participant. Every veteran experienced a language barrier in greater and lesser degrees while deployed. Even though, at first, this barrier did not seem to affect their daily tasks, the barrier caused problems for them at critical moments. All the veterans expressed that they were unprepared linguistically and culturally prior to their deployments. They all seemed to experience very intense culture shock at times. Over the course of their deployment and enrollment in college, all the veteran participants reported some type of perspective change in their opinions and knowledge about Iraq, ALC, and the Middle East. All 19 participants had similar reasons, or motivations, relating to their experiences in Iraq, for learning ALC post-deployment. Finally, it would appear that their post-deployment education seemed to illuminate their war-experience in some way, though the nature and role of this illumination is difficult for them to describe and warrants further study. Every single veteran reported that their decision to study ALC was directly influenced by their deployments to Iraq. They experienced a paradigm shift in their view of not just of Iraq and Iraqi people but of the Middle East as a whole.

The following and final chapter is devoted to discussion of how the research data informs and answers the three main research questions in this study.
CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS

Once G.I. Bill beneficiaries became active citizens, they altered the civic landscape of the United States, helping to make the political system yet more inclusive and egalitarian during the middle decades of the twentieth century. (Mettler, 2005, p.11)

Overview

The three main research questions driving this study were 1) what were Iraq war veterans’ motivations for learning Arabic language and culture post-deployment, 2) how did Iraq war veterans’ intercultural experiences affect their attitudes towards Arabic language and culture, and 3) what were other affective variables in Iraq war veterans’ Arabic language and culture learning. This chapter links the current literature on language learning motivation and other affective variables in the classroom to the data collected and analyzed and answers the research questions originally posed in this study. Based on the data, chapter five discusses implications for curriculum and professional development for foreign language professionals and recommends possible further research, not only in language learner motivation and critical language pedagogy but also in improving veteran education.

Because motivation is one of the affective variables that students bring to the classroom context, this study drew heavily on Gardner & Lambert’s (1959 & 1972) and Dornyei’s (1994, 1996, 2003 & 2005) work with language learning motivation, Norton’s
(2000) work on language and identity, and Allport’s Contact hypothesis (1954) to set a theoretical framework for research. As will be discussed, these theories appear operative among these veterans. In fact, this research study seems to support a number of previous studies in language learning motivation.

Related Literature Revisited

As was described at length in chapter two, language learner motivation refers to the learners drive to learn the language and variables that contribute to this drive including experiences and psychological processes to help them achieve language proficiency goals. Dornyei (1994, 1996, 2003, 2005 & 2006) and Dornyei and Cziser (2005) posited that there were two main types of language learning motivation. The first they termed as instrumental motivation. Instrumental motivation relates more to the language learner’s goals such as to communicate while on a trip or to get a job. The second type is integrative motivation. Integrative motivation is manifested in the psychological changes that a language learner experiences while learning the language and can be linked to Norton’s (2000) idea of investment, which incorporates students’ social histories and their relationships to the social world to their language learning motivation.

Other studies specifically involving Arabic learners have been conducted by Husseinali (2004 & 2006), Al-Batal (1995 &2003), Belnap (1987) and Alosh (1997) and examined a variety of issues in the teaching and learning of Arabic, but highlighted instrumental motivations for student ALC learning. Husseinali’s studies in 2004 and 2006 specifically discussed language learning motivation in the context of student
language learning goals; i.e., their instrumental motivations. His study focused on the quantitative, measurable outcomes that are operative in the Arabic language classroom. In contrast, my study examined a specific minority group of students and qualitative aspects to their language learning motivation. In accordance with the motivational construct proposed by Gardner and Lambert (1972) and expanded upon by Dornyei (1996 & 2005), and Dornyei and Csizer (2005), the veterans exhibited integrative and instrumental motivation in their language learning. However, also apparent in the data is Norton’s (2000) idea of investment based on the influences that their intercultural experiences have had on their motivation to learn the language. Using the data from my research, I propose a third type of motivation in the classroom context that I call influential, which incorporates Norton’s ideas and integrates them with the work of Dornyei and others.

Gardner (1988) and Gardner & Lambert (1972) posited four main variables in language learning motivation – context, anxiety, external influences and individual difference. Drawing on their research, I explored the possibility that the veteran experience in Iraq influenced their language learning motivation in the Arabic language classroom. Within Gardner’s paradigm, the data analysis from my study posited that within a context of conflict, veterans’ intercultural interactions acted as external influences contributing to their Arabic language learning motivation. These external influences had such a powerful affect on many of the veterans that they overcame other variables such as language anxiety and their individual learning differences.

Besides motivational variables, other affective variables such as attitude, anxiety, and self-confidence, which all appear in veterans’ language-learning experiences, are
discussed. The data support that these affective variables influenced the goals and language proficiency achieved (beginner, intermediate, and advanced) by the veterans. Also revealed is a more illusive affective variable operative among some veterans, which I termed illumination. The illumination affect contributed to their motivation to learn the language and learn more about the culture post-deployment. The exact psychological mechanism, and its impact, that triggers illumination are unclear but evidence of illumination arose conspicuously in their Arabic language learning. The veteran students consistently reported in their interviews instances of learning material in their classes that filled gaps and enhanced their understandings of ALC and the intercultural experiences that they had while deployed. At times, they felt satisfaction when reaffirming, through classroom work, that what they learned while deployed was reliable. Linguistically, much of what they had learned was dialect and, even though it differed from their classroom Arabic, moments of enlightenment validated their linguistic experiences. When they connected with classroom material, they had thoughts like “oh, that’s what was going on!” They had a more complete picture of something that was fragmented before. Culturally, nearly all the participants reported that they felt a clarification of what they experienced in Iraq after taking Arabic language, Middle East history and culture classes.

**Addressing the Research Questions**

Qualitative research data can be difficult to organize and systematize (Creswell, 2007 & Lieblich, Rufal-Mashiach, Rivka, & Zilber, 1998). The results from qualitative research studies also have particular challenges in their presentation (Boulton &
Hammersley, 1996). To present the results of this data in an organized and understandable way, Table 5.1 displays an overview of the research questions and the summary list of findings to facilitate the more complete and detailed discussion that follows it.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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<td>What are Iraq war veterans’ motivations for learning Arabic?</td>
<td>• Integrative Motivation</td>
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<td>• Instrumental Motivation</td>
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<td>• Other aspects to motivation – Influential motivation</td>
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<td>How do their intercultural experiences affect Iraq war veterans’ attitudes towards Arabic language and culture?</td>
<td>• Culture Shock</td>
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<tr>
<td>What are other affective variables influencing Iraq war veterans learning of Arabic language and culture?</td>
<td>• Attitude change / perspective change</td>
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<td>• Illumination</td>
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<td>• Language Anxiety</td>
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<td>• Perceived hostilities</td>
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<td>• External Factors</td>
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Table 5.1: Research Questions and Findings

RQ1: What are Iraq war veterans’ motivations for learning Arabic?

In this study, I endeavored to discover underlying reasons for these veterans deciding to learn Arabic language and culture post-deployment and to find out if their intercultural and linguistic experiences while they were deployed in Iraq influenced their academic decisions. Overwhelmingly, the data revealed that their Iraq experiences did influence their academic decisions to learn the language for a number of specific reasons.
In light of current motivation theories, the participants of this study showed significant similarities to findings in studies conducted by Gardner (1972), Dornyei (1994, 1996, 2001 & 2003), Dornyei and Csizer (2005) and Ehrman (1996), Samimy and Tabuse (1992) and seem to support current motivation theory, which proposes a complex psychological process operative within students of the foreign language classroom. Following is a discussion of the major motivators identified from the data collected and how these motivations support motivation theories proposed by Gardner (1972) and Dornyei (1996).

Motivation in Iraq War Veterans

As discussed in chapter four, when all participants were asked about their main motivations for learning Arabic language and culture (ALC) post-deployment, every single participant clearly stated that their experiences in Iraq influenced their decisions to take ALC classes. It was apparent from their answers that there was operative among the veterans both instrumental and integrative (Gardner & Lambert, 1959 & 1972; Dornyei, 2003) reasons for learning ALC. However, also operative in their motivations were their influential experiences in Iraq, which strongly supports Norton’s (2000) postulation that motivation in language learning is more complex than described by Gardner and Lambert (1959) and Dornyei (1994, 2003, & 2005). Previous exposure to ALC in Iraq had added to the context of their language learning within the classroom.

Revisiting the Language-Learning Motivation Construct and Contact Hypothesis

In support of Clement, Dornyei, and Noel’s (1994) and Dornyei’s (1996) construct of language motivation, the veterans of my study exhibited the three main components of language learning behavior and linguistic competence: integrative
motivation, linguistic self-confidence, and appraisal of the classroom environment.

Many of the veterans expressed motivations that were integrative in nature, at least in the situational aspect of their language learning, which refers to the social aspects of learning a foreign language (Dornyei, 1996) For example, many believed Arabic was an important language to learn, without elaborating on why it was important.

Finally, all the veterans appraised their classroom environments. For example, some reported feeling that heritage speakers were harboring hostility toward them in the ALC classroom. There were those who believed that they received better dialect information from native speaker teachers (Braine, 1999) while others wanted a teacher who had to learn Arabic “from scratch,” referring to non-native speaker teachers (Braine, 1999). Of relevance is that they all reflected and evaluated their classrooms and their instructors, which supports the final factor in Clement, Dornyei, and Noel’s (1994) language motivation construct.

Veteran motivation to learn Arabic language and culture post-deployment showed all the characteristics of this complex, recursive process that Dornyei (2005) re-conceptualized into the L2 motivational self-system (refer to Figure 2.1). The veterans expressed integrative and instrumental motives when discussing their future language proficiency goals. They also were quite reflective on what they needed to do to improve their language learning. Their “ought-to” selves were expressed through their classroom learning experiences. Additionally, their previous language exposure played an integral role in their motivations for learning Arabic post deployment. The data of this study reveal strong support for Dornyei’s (2005) re-conceptualized motivational construct.
Norton (2000) expands on the notion of instrumental motivation to include the “complex social history and multiple desires” (p. 11) of the language learner. The results also support Norton’s (2000) construct of language motivation, which includes the notion of investment. “Investment” includes the internal psychological changes experienced by students in their attitudes and perceptions toward the target language and culture. The veterans expressed that they felt a strong sense that Arabic was an “important language” for them to know in their future, even though they could not definitely say what that future would entail. This sense of importance derived from their historical experiences with ALC while they were deployed to Iraq. However, this sense of importance was also tied in with their future career goals, demonstrating that their language learning motivation was not ahistorical or unmediated (Norton, 2000) and occurred outside of the classroom setting (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Syed, 2001).

Some Final Remarks on RQ1 & Language Learning Motivation

A number of participants had no specific stated goals or purposes when asked why they continued to take Arabic classes, so it is reasonable to conclude that their motivations were not just instrumental in nature. It became difficult to classify their motivation as just integrative or instrumental. Following Gardner (1988) and Gardner & Lambert’s (1972) original socio-educational model of language learning motivation and Norton’s (2000) work on language learning and identity, the data seem to support that a variety of factors such as attitude, anxiety, and classroom context are active in the veterans’ ALC learning. Therefore, it follows that, with further study, an additional category of motivation should be proposed that takes into account the language learners’
influences outside the classroom and previous experiences (Norton, 2000). Influential motivation may play a larger role than language professionals realize.

RQ2: How do Iraq war veterans’ intercultural experiences affect their attitudes toward ALC?

It is clear, based on the research data, that Iraq war veterans had deep and affective intercultural experiences, which influenced them in ways that motivate them to learn more about the language and culture. This study explored how these intercultural experiences influenced their motivation to learn Arabic. Taking into account all of the socio-cultural and psychological factors that influence a student’s academic decisions is outside the scope of this discussion. However, socio-cultural theory as originally proposed by Vygotsky (1934/1986) and as expanded upon within the context of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) by Lantolf and Thorne (2006) can help in answering this research question.

If these veterans were experiencing mediated intercultural interactions through the use of translators, and if they learned Arabic from these translators, these interactions would affect the veterans’ behaviors, perceptions, and attitudes. Application of Vygotsky’s mental mediator theory (1986) and Lantolf’s expansion socio-cultural theory in SLA (1999) puts into perspective some of the psychological processes operative in the veterans’ attitudes toward ALC. It appeared that Vygotsky (1986) and Lantolf (1999 & 2006) best explained the affects of Iraq war veterans’ intercultural and linguistic interactions on their paradigm and attitude shifts about Arabic language and culture pre- and post-deployment. Vygotsky (1986) proposed that learning is a mediated process and
helps to build new mental models or re-adjust previous existing paradigms. Lantolf (1999) proposed that adults can build on their already formed mental models, paradigms, and constructs in order to appropriate new cultural models and modify their conceptual organization (pg. 37). The veterans exhibited both Vygosky’s and Lantolf’s constructs in the data based on their narratives.

Close scrutiny of the intercultural and linguistic experiences, as described by each interviewee, reveals that each veteran underwent common evolutions in attitude and perception changes about ALC. For example, the veterans reported that at first the language factor had not posed any major obstacles to accomplishing their daily duties. After the veterans had experienced culture shock involving linguistic and cultural misunderstandings, they began to realize that not knowing ALC was a barrier to understanding their experiences. The cultural misunderstandings were often rooted in different mental models and cultural construction of gender roles (Gardner, 1982, Vygotsky, 1986, Lantolf, 1999 & Norton, 2000). As they adapted and adjusted their own conceptual organizations of societal rules, using translators as mediators in their linguistic and cultural learning, they re-formed their mental models and paradigms to incorporate new cultural information. Norton (2000) calls this an “investment” and proposes that this “investment” helps language learners to re-arrange and re-organize (similar to Lantolf & Vygotsky’s theories on mental model and sociocultural development) their own identities while learning another language. The data from Norton’s (2000) study suggested an element of identity re-arrangement with language learners, which was evidenced by veterans in this study through their perspective changes and their commitments to learning an admittedly difficult language, such as Arabic. This re-adjustment of their
mental models and paradigms was a requirement for them to understand their environment and for their safety and security. Knowing the language became an increasing integral part of this paradigm readjustment.

Many experienced a type of mediated learning (Vygotsky, 1978 & 1986) through their interactions with translators and interpreters. When the translators/interpreters were playing the role of ALC instructor, the veterans believed they learned a lot from the translators. The translators/interpreters acted as mediators of veterans’ ALC understanding. However, when the same translators acted as mediators of conversation and information involving Iraqi locals, many of the veterans questioned the quality and accuracy of the information they received from the translators. Basically, the translators were believable as teachers but not as translators/interpreters. Their mistrust was one factor that motivated the veterans to learn Arabic so they could bypass the use of the translator in future interactions.

Contact Hypothesis Revisited

Allport’s Contact Hypothesis (1954) addresses how individuals form group identities and traces the process by which individuals begin to restructure the group identity to be more inclusive. As part of this group identity formation, it is also necessary to define and categorize non-community members. Allport developed a set of behaviors that lead to increasingly prejudicial actions against non-community members. This Group-Norm Theory of prejudice also includes ways and behaviors in which groups will modify their categorizations in order to include a larger community, a process Allport called re-integration. The veterans reported that their perspective changes about Arabs,
Arab culture, and the Middle East, inspired them to understand ALC better, suggesting that they were finding ways to restructure their group identity to include elements of ALC. These veterans came into contact with ALC in a context of conflict; a context that suggests, on Allport’s scale of the categorization process, discrimination and physical attack. The data revealed that the veterans’ perspectives changed about the ‘other’ group (Iraqis), based on their intercultural and linguistic experiences in Iraq. The results of my study suggest that taking ALC coursework post-deployment is part of the process of the re-integration of this ‘other’ group, Iraqis, bringing them into the larger community to which the veterans belong. This re-integration process includes learning the language and culture of the ‘other.’

RQ3: What are other affective variables influencing Iraq war veterans’ Arabic language and culture learning?

As shown in the emergent themes section in chapter four, there were additional affective variables besides motivation involved in the veterans’ Arabic language and culture learning. As recognized by Dornyei’s studies with foreign language classrooms (1994, 1996, & 2003), it is outside the scope of my study to identify all aspects of a classroom environment since it is so dynamic. However, it is appropriate to mention some of the most obvious recurring variables as they appeared in the data analysis and discuss their relevance.

*Attitude*

Attitudes of the language learner toward a second language (L2) affects a language learners success (Baker, 1988 & Ellis, 1994), affects their willingness to
assimilate into the classroom environment, and affects their motivation to learn a L2 (Baker, 1988). Veterans expressed a dynamic variety of attitudes towards learning ALC in their interviews. Some explained how their attitudes changed towards ALC because of their experiences in Iraq. Others expressed that they were not aware of their attitudes towards ALC learning as a second language until after experiencing intercultural misunderstandings that made them feel unsafe or insecure while deployed. Baker’s (1988) characteristics of language learner attitudes, which are most pertinent to these veterans are: 1) they are learned, 2) they can be modified by experience, and 3) they are dimensional with varying degrees of favorability and unfavorability.

Direct measurement of language learner attitudes depends mainly on self-reporting (Ellis, 1994) and the reports that these veterans gave reflected that they brought certain attitudes about ALC into the context of the language classroom (Samimy & Tabuse, 1994 & Alosh, 1997). It is reasonable to assume that the participants’ attitudes towards learning Arabic as an L2 may be classed as favorable, because, despite having negative intercultural experiences, encountering the ‘other’ culture (Iraqis) in a context of conflict, and doubting their return to the region, they decided to study ALC post-deployment. As described by Baker (1988), their attitudes are dynamic in nature.

Bob and Brandon offered good examples of the dynamic nature of attitude in L2 learning. Both attitudes were classed as unfavorable. Bob’s attitude towards ALC changed over time as the classroom work difficulty increased. He also believed that some of his teachers, especially those teachers of Arab origin, did not give him the basics of Arabic language so that he could have more success in his learning. Bob’s attitude towards ALC was initially favorable but changed with his lack of success in the language.
Brandon did not want to study ALC, because he found learning French more personally favorable, but, eventually, he decided to take ALC classes to help his career. His attitude toward ALC could be classed as unfavorable, even though he decided to take ALC classes. Due to the dynamic nature of attitude in L2 learning (Baker, 1988), I hesitate to categorize Brandon and Bob’s language learner attitudes on a bipolar scale.

Other veterans reported very favorable attitudes about learning ALC as an L2. For example, Cameron and Quinn included ALC coursework in their major programs of study and both expressed favorable attitudes in their language learning success. Even Richard, who had less success in L2, enjoyed his Arabic classes and enjoyed learning the language. Only one veteran participant stopped learning ALC and discontinued ALC coursework due to his lack of success, but he still expressed favorable attitudes toward ALC. Therefore, as these examples illustrate, attitude is an elusive variable that is difficult to measure and categorize. Attitude plays a role in the behaviors and motivations of language learners, but sometimes requires examination independently in each individual.

Illumination

As described in chapter four, the veteran participants underwent a combination of clarification, validation, and elucidation that I refer to as “illumination” of their Iraq experiences while taking ALC courses post-deployment. Identifying the exact psychological mechanisms that effect this illumination is outside the scope of the study, but illumination became part of the ALC classroom context. Having had half of the participants as students in my Arabic language classes, I saw the impact of illumination on the context of my own classrooms. In fact, it was observing this illumination in the
classroom context that played a role in my decisions to research the post-deployment veteran student population in Arabic classes. Many of my veteran students would ask questions in the classroom that came from their Iraq experiences and then they would respond with such phrases as “oh, that’s why they did that” or “I never understood why we said it that way until now.”

Veterans brought their Iraq experiences into the classroom in a variety of ways. For example, all participants brought elements of dialect into their ALC classrooms, which caused varying responses from their instructors. In my classroom observations, I saw several teachers respond very favorably when the veterans used Iraqi dialect in their speech during classroom activities. The veterans stated in their interviews that, even though the Arabic they used in class differed from the dialect they experienced in Iraq, they began to see the relationship between MSA and the Arabic dialects once they reached intermediate levels of learning.

Not only did they see a relationship between the language they heard in Iraq and what they learned in the classroom, many reported that they learned things in class that clarified some of the intercultural and linguistic experiences they’d had in Iraq. One veteran began to understand better the conflicts between the Shi’a and Sunni communities with whom he had to work while deployed after taking classes on Islam. Another veteran while stationed in Iraq didn’t understand how using certain gestures and behaviors was seen as offensive but learned more about the cultural meanings of these gestures and behaviors in his language classes. Several other veterans stated in their interviews that learning about ALC post-deployment helped them make sense of their experiences in Iraq.
Of significance are the veterans’ own reports of how their coursework helped them to process their intercultural experiences in Iraq. Many felt that their classes helped them to understand the war experience better as a whole. As Quinn stated:

We didn’t know what we were getting into over there the first time [first tour of duty in Iraq]. At least the second time around, I’d taken some classes and knew about the culture and language and stuff like that. It totally changed my idea about what happened the first time around. Then, the second time around [second tour of duty], it seemed to make more sense.

Academic understanding gave meaning to the veteran experience and acted as would a detailed, extensive debriefing of their experiences in Iraq. All the veterans believed that their pre-deployment training in ALC – whether through the military or through other educational institutions - was inadequate to prepare them for interacting with Iraqi locals. Even those who believed the military prepared them for the job duties believed that they lacked sufficient linguistic and cultural orientation prior to their deployments. Therefore, their academic coursework fills more than just a knowledge gap for these veterans and seems to help them integrate their experiences emotionally as well. The role of illumination as a psychological process warrants further study beyond the foreign language classroom.

Language-learner self-perceptions and student self-confidence

As previously discussed in chapter two, one important aspect to the language motivation construct (Dornyei, 1996), is learner self-confidence (including language anxiety). Most of the participants described themselves as “not language learners” or “not good at languages.” Samimy & Tabuse’s (1992) study with Japanese language learners found that motivation to learn the language over time deteriorated because of the
increased negative impact that affective variables had on language learning outcomes. In support of their findings, after the intermediate level of language learning, many of the participants discontinued their Arabic language courses. Their reasons for discontinuing were attributable to the negative impact of the affective variables such as level of difficulty, time investment, and their lack of confidence in the language. Only two participants out the nineteen decided to major in the language. One admittedly stopped taking coursework in Arabic at the basic level, because of its difficulty for him. Most of the subjects were interviewed while at the beginning-intermediate level of language learning (see Appendix C) and had not moved into advanced levels of proficiency in their college coursework. So language anxiety affected the veterans in this study much as it did the participants in Samimy and Tabuse’s (1992) study.

As pointed out by Baker & MacIntyre (2003):

“Simply put, the greater the anxiety, the less likely the person will be willing to communicate.” (pg. 69)

However, in contrast to Baker & MacIntyre’s (2003) observations, the veterans in my study had a higher level of participation in oral communication activities than the other students in their classes based on the observational data. They seemed to show a higher level of willingness to communicate in the target language. Possibly, the veterans’ previous ALC exposure de-sensitized them to the communication anxiety referred to in the Baker & MacIntyre (2003) study. As previously proposed, it may be their language learning investment (Norton, 2000) that continues to motivate their language learning despite their own anxieties and difficulties in language learning.
It also is possible that when the participants described themselves as “not a language learner,” they were not necessarily expressing anxiety, but were describing their language learning skill set. It is difficult to categorize these self-descriptions within the language learning anxiety construct. Their self-description reflected their lack of self-confidence as a language learner. They perceived themselves as having more difficulty than a person who is a “language-learner.” However, there was no clear definition available from them on what constituted a “language learner.” It is also possible that they perceived themselves to be non-traditional students within the four-year institutional model and, as such, believed themselves different than their classmate (discussed further below. This aspect of the study warrants further investigation as their perceptions about their potential proficiency may relate to motivation at more advanced levels of language study (Noels, Pelletier, & Clement, 2000).

Perceived hostility

Many veterans reported that they felt hostility directed toward them in the classroom because of their military service. They believed there existed in academia hostility toward military personnel. Many times, they perceived this classroom hostility as coming from the heritage students and native speaker teachers (teachers with Arab origin) and attributed it to Arab and Muslim political views of the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. As Zach expressed:

Yeah, my teacher doesn’t like me much. I made the mistake of telling her I was in Iraq and she didn’t realize I was in the military until later. Then she wouldn’t even look at me.
However, during classroom observations, I did not directly detect any hostility toward any participants during my presence in the classroom. The veterans’ perceived hostility did not act as a demotivating factor (Dornyei, 2003) because many continued to study Arabic to the intermediate levels. Without more extensive classroom observations, I am not able to identify the bases of the perceived hostility. The perception may be rooted in the veterans’ beliefs, defensive attitudes, and sensitivity to the academic political atmosphere. It may also stem from their self-perceptions as non-traditional language learners within the four-year institutional model.

It is possible that this perception of hostility reflects issues of diversity and equity in the classroom. Inevitable power relationships that veterans subconsciously perceive in the classroom may be interpreted as hostile (Reagan & Osborn, 2002):

“We recognize that our understanding of the teaching and learning of foreign languages has been colored not only by race, ethnicity, and gender, but also by our personal and professional interests in human language, as well as by our experiences in learning and living with other human languages and cultures.” (p. 137)

Their perception may reflect their minority status more than actual hostilities toward them, but there is not enough evidence in this study to support any particular factor over the other. Veterans are a federally recognized minority as are racial and financial minorities. Their perceptions of hostility in the classroom may be a manifestation of power issues between minority and majority students. Pennycook (2001) discussed inter-classroom relationships within the context of pedagogy as a whole. It is unrealistic to accept that larger, global issues do not find their way into the language classroom. As Pennycook (2001) elaborates:
“Whereas some might be happy to believe that classrooms are autonomous islands of language learning, unaffected by the world outside, we might nevertheless acknowledge that with government jets screaming overhead, the outside world sometimes cannot be ignored.” (p. 117)

So, until further study, classroom hostility toward veterans in the ALC classroom cannot be discussed definitively as a factor in motivation or demotivation. It deserves mention because of the high number of veteran participants who perceived classroom hostility.

External Factors

Though perceived hostility cannot be supported by the data in this study, veterans do definitely face unique challenges in completing their college educations, which set them apart from the average four-year college enrollee. As previously noted in chapter four, most of these veterans were reservists requiring them to train at various times throughout the year. Many joined the military, at least in part, to help pay for their college education. However, their military service more often than not interfered with their four-year time allotment for degree completion. Scheduling issues related to their deployment obligations, service training obligations, and part-time work schedules could be considered demotivating factors in their ALC learning (Dornyei & Csizer, 2002). Their difficulties in scheduling and completing the required foreign language curricula in the allotted amount of time given at four-year institutions could be translated into a perceived hostility. No specific guidelines are given to ALC instructors and professors on how much reasonable accommodation must be made for reservists in the classroom. Navigating a four-year institution can be difficult for them; they perceive it as a hostile environment.
Limitations, Recommendations & Implications

Analyses of the data revealed that motivation for Iraq war veterans to learn Arabic was a complex psychological process that included the influences of intercultural experiences and educational goals, but was not limited by those two factors. The data showed that their motivations also included their personal histories, their perceptions of ALC, and their access to education.

Limitations of the Study

This research included only nineteen veterans taking Arabic language and culture courses in the Midwest. It is important to keep in mind that in a qualitative study such as this, some of the results may be subjective due to the close interactions that occurred during the interviews (Creswell, 2007 and Boulton & Hammersley, 1996) and the rapport that developed overtime between veteran students and myself. In order to maintain the integrity and validity of the study, I attempted to broaden the research pool to a larger number of veterans who did not take ALC classes with me as their instructor and attempted to reach beyond one institution. The 19 veterans in this study was a convenience sample of research participants, whom I met through Arabic language and culture courses. Some were my students, and some were not. Nineteen participants in a qualitative study provided a rich pool of data from which to draw conclusions. It is hoped that this larger sample of participants from broader sources will help to eliminate as much subjectivity as possible and diminish potential influence or subjectivity I as the researcher may have on the data.

The most significant limitation of this study is that it focused only on those veterans who had decided to study Arabic post-deployment. There were no data analyzed
of veterans who had decided not to study ALC at all. Nor was there included data from Vietnam War-era veterans or Korean War-era veterans. A study of the veterans’ career/academic choices of those wars could provide an interesting comparison. Another limitation included the availability of the veterans for interviews. Many were redeployed for second and third tours of duty during the course of this study and reaching them was difficult. The mobile nature and limited availability of these veterans (referred to in chapter three as “transient nature” of the subjects), had a direct affect on their academic careers and made interviewing difficult. Due to their transient nature, interviewing was conducted in the most convenient time for them, sometimes by phone and sometimes through Internet chat.

**Recommendations for Further Research**

First, I recommend that there be more studies in language motivation that apply qualitative measures and methods to student data collection and evaluation. All the research reviewed to inform my study employed survey and quantitative methodology in order to measure motivation in language students. None of the reviewed research studies (quantitative or qualitative) accounted for students’ historical and intercultural experiences prior to studying the language. Studies by Syed (2001) and Husseinali (2004 & 2006) examined heritage language learners, but the participants’ prior exposure to the language and culture was not analyzed in their research data. Nor did those studies include student narratives about perceptions and beliefs on the language, or the change in their perceptions over time. There is a dearth of in-depth, qualitative studies, employing narrative methodology in the field of language learning motivation in critical languages.
Qualitative studies give a depth and description to language learning motivation that is omitted in quantitative methodology.

Second, with the record enrollments reported by colleges and universities across the country in Arabic language and Middle East Studies courses, and with the return of millions veterans from Iraq and Afghanistan (all eligible for G.I. Bill benefits), it behooves us at institutions of higher education to examine closely the contexts the veterans bring to our language classrooms in order to improve instruction and meet the needs of this generation of students. Further research is needed into their integrative and instrumental motivations will become part of the larger context and part of the classrooms into which they are enrolled. As was noted by Norton (2000), I also observed more than just a goal-oriented approach to learning language. The concept of language investment (Norton, 2000), when applied to the data in this research, better described the language learning motivations of the participants. Also apparent was that their intercultural interactions affected their decisions about academic and career goals, such as taking ALC classes. This affective influence played an integral role in motivating them to learn Arabic, even though most reported that it was a hard language to learn and that they did not perceive themselves as good language learners. It was difficult for the participants to articulate what exactly the variable was that drove them to continue learning Arabic language post-deployment. This affective influence warrants further investigation, because it may have implications for a larger body of language learners.

Third, I recommend that professionals in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) conduct more qualitative research studies on motivation focusing on students who have reached an advanced level of proficiency in critical and less
commonly taught languages. Examining advanced level speakers’ prior intercultural experiences and exposures may reveal common themes motivating them to achieve higher levels of proficiency. A recent statement by the National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages (NCOLCTL), addressed the issue:

Approximately ninety-one percent of Americans who study foreign languages in our schools, colleges, and universities choose French, German, Italian, or Spanish; while only nine percent choose languages such as Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, Yoruba, Russian, Swahili and the other languages spoken by the overwhelming majority of people around the world. While many of the less commonly taught languages are critically important to our national interest in the 21st century, the low level of current enrollments jeopardizes the very existence of the relatively few existing programs, and significantly restricts access to language learning opportunities for the large majority of students in the United States. (National Council of Less Commonly Taught Languages, 2009)

Research in second language acquisition as a whole includes mainly studies in French, Spanish, German, and Italian. Including research in critical and less commonly taught languages broadens and diversifies the body of research. Critical languages, such as Arabic, Chinese, Russian, and Urdu, are defined as those languages that help the U.S. government fulfill critical needs in foreign diplomacy, economic agencies, and intelligence gathering. As was evident in this research, being unfamiliar with the critical language of Arabic put American soldiers at a disadvantage on the battlefield. Their safety and security was often in the hands of a single translator, who seemed to them unprepared and unreliable. Increasing the number of research studies in critical and less commonly taught languages should encourage and motivate educators to develop new curricula and methods of instruction, to develop resources for educational materials used in the classroom, and to create better teacher training programs for critical and less
commonly taught language teachers. The goal of diverse research should lead eventually to increased numbers of proficient speakers who can fill critical needs.

Fourth, many of the critical and less commonly taught languages under discussion here, such as Arabic, are considered category four languages. Category four languages are those languages classed as more difficult to learn. It is a somewhat arbitrary classification system that states it takes four times as long to reach proficiency in a category four language such as Arabic, Japanese, Chinese, and Russian as it does to reach proficiency in a category one language such as Spanish and French. I recommend we ensure that students reach higher levels of proficiency in category four languages by offering instruction in them throughout K-12 education programs. The data collected in this research suggests that preparing for language and culture exposure throughout K-12 would lead to better prepared recruits, who often join immediately out of high school.

In recognition of the need to begin offering critical language education at the kindergarten level, Iowa State University’s National K-12 Foreign Language Resource Center received a 1.3 million dollar grant to research curriculum development for critical languages in public schools (U.S.D.O.E Report, 2009). Research supports K-12 language learning, correlating foreign language study with higher SAT scores (Cooper, 1987 & Eddy, 1981) and other standardized tests (Armstrong & Rodgers, 1997). Pennycook (2001) argued for a critical emphasis in language education viewing “language as productive as well as reflective of social relations.” (p. 72). It follows that offering improved K-12 programs in critical languages may lead to stronger, more prepared military.
Improved language teacher training techniques and the development of resources and curriculum in critical and less commonly taught languages is an integral part of expanding instruction throughout K-12. Not only would incorporating critical language education throughout K-12 address the issue of language proficiency but could also provide some orientation for the potential recruits prior to deployment. New recruits for the military would be more linguistically and culturally aware. K-12 critical and less commonly taught language education has the potential to fill the language and cultural education gap currently existing with our military personnel. Additional research could form the basis for compelling arguments that convince America’s public school systems that foreign language exposure should be a “standard” and not a “frill.”

Finally, Humes (2006) and Mettler (2005) proposed that the education of military personnel and veterans changed the face of our middle class after the Second World War. Veterans, who would not have had access to education otherwise, attended colleges and universities across the country, thus producing a more highly educated and trained workforce, possibly increasing the nature and size of our middle class in the United States. It is possible that with further research, we will see the contributions of this new generation of veterans to the fields of Arabic language, Middle East studies and Military history. Iraq war veterans may offer new perspectives and develop fields of study, only possible with the experiences and background that they have had in Iraq. Further research is needed to understand the role that education will play in this generation of veterans’ careers and how they will translate their own experiences into possible civic or academic action.
Pedagogical Implications - “What if?”

Chapter one discussed how the G.I. Bill changed the social structure in many communities by providing unprecedented access to education (Mettler, 2005 & Humes, 2006). For instance, the academic choices and civic involvement of post-deployment World War II veterans changed the face of our civil rights movement (Mettler, 2005). The societal impact of this generation of Iraq veterans, all using the G.I. Bill to fund their education, is as yet unknown and unclear. Due to the limitations of the study, it is difficult to make larger assumptions with this small, convenience sample of veterans. However, we can see the pedagogical implications of studying this population of students, based on veterans’ impact on and contributions to society in the past.

But what if we take the results and findings of this study and apply it to a larger context. This is only a “what if” scenario, but let us consider for a minute the global context of this research. What emerges are issues of critical language pedagogy in the United States, U.S. foreign language education policy (K-12 and beyond) and how these relate to our national security, economy, and diplomacy with the rest of the world. To review, Arabic is considered to be “critical need” language by the U.S. State department. “Critical need” languages are described as those languages in which our government considers critical to have proficient speakers (linguists) working in the government and private sector in order to protect American interests at home and abroad.

Our current national foreign language education policies do not strongly support the teaching and learning of these languages at the K-12 level (Belnap, 1987 & 2007). At the college level, critical need languages can be found sporadically at colleges and universities across the country, but there is no standard such as for more commonly
taught languages as Spanish and French (Alosh, 1997 & Al-Batal, 2005). Adding to this context are certain facts:

- Approximately one quarter of the world’s countries are majority Muslim, which means that their respective populations have exposure to Arabic through the Qur’an and will have at least a reading knowledge of the language.

- We are at war in two of these countries, one is entirely Arabic-speaking – Iraq. The other country, Afghanistan, uses the Arabic script but the populations speak Pashto and Dari – two languages that are rarely taught even at the college level in the United States.

- Several million American soldiers have cycled through Iraq and their exposure to Arabic language and culture has ranged from six months to two years – longer than most study abroad programs offered through U.S. colleges and universities. Data is still unavailable to the number of American soldiers that have cycled through Afghanistan at this time.

All of the 19 veteran participants of this study clearly expressed that their lack of cultural and linguistic orientation to ALC prior to their deployments in Iraq put them at a great disadvantage on the battlefield. Is it really a stretch of the imagination to apply these findings to the larger context set described above? If we do apply the findings of this study to the broader context, we can see how our lack of cultural and linguistic orientation as a nation has put us at a disadvantage in national security, economics and
foreign diplomacy. It would seem prudent to incorporate some type of language and cultural exposure at least at the college level, if not in K-12.

There is a disconnect between our national critical need for proficient linguists in these languages and our foreign language education policy. The disconnect contributes to the lack of cultural and linguistic orientation for our K-12 education organizations to offer languages such as Arabic (let alone Dari and Pashto) prior to entry into colleges and universities. However, in most countries where Arabic, Dari, and Pashto are spoken, English is offered at the kindergarten level. Maybe there is something we can learn from their foreign language education policy that we can implement in our own.

Further research in all of these areas is needed, but the pedagogical implications to this ‘what if’ scenario are far-reaching. On a more practical level, there are some pedagogical implications that come from the results of this research that are less-global in context and more specific to Arabic. They are discussed below.

Arabic Language and Culture & Arabic for Specific Purposes

As stated above, we are experiencing record enrollments at colleges and universities across the country and Arabic language classes have grown in population so much in the last five years that Arabic is no longer considered a less commonly taught language (though it is still considered a critical language by the U.S. Department of Defense). However, most of the veterans in this study reported problems in completing their Arabic language education. Four-year colleges tend to have a curriculum that presumes students will take language courses consecutively or concurrently. It is possible that, given the influx of veterans into Arabic language classrooms and given that
Arabic is a critical-need language, we should re-examine the curricular model followed and incorporate more novel curriculum practices in Arabic language programs. Most colleges and universities incorporate online components into their curricula. It would be possible, in fact easy, to incorporate a distance learning/online curriculum at a very minimal cost to the institution to accommodate our veterans abroad so that they could continue their Arabic language learning without interruption, even during deployment or relocation.

It is also important to examine the language learning goals of these students. The four-year institution foreign language curricular model uses foreign language courses to support the study of other disciplines such as literature, history, and political science (Alosh, 1997). Perhaps instituting a curricular model that not only supports those disciplines but also incorporates Arabic for specific purposes, using the English for specific purposes model, will further accommodate these non-traditional students in their ALC learning. However, none of the institutions that these veterans attended offered any type of online Arabic language learning curriculum or Arabic for specific purposes.

On that same note, the study by Inbar, Donitsa-Schmidt, and Shohamy (2001) exemplified the need for a curriculum that incorporated Arabic for specific purposes. The Israeli students in the research learned Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) in the classroom and, though Palestinians understand MSA, it is not the Palestinians’ native language. In fact, depending on the context of the usage, the usage of MSA communicates different political agendas. The teaching of MSA, instead of the Palestinian dialect, in the Israeli classroom could further divide the Israeli and Palestinian

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1 Because MSA is also the language emphasized for usage by Arab nationalist movements and fundamental Islamist movements (Versteegh, 1997)
populations. As exemplified in the results of Inbar, Donitsa-Schmidt, and Shohamy’s (2001) research, it is important to set specific language learning goals and know the purposes for which the language will be used. Understanding the specific purposes for which students use Arabic will create more effective speakers and fulfill the government’s critical need for Arabic linguists. Teaching Arabic for specific purposes, similar to teaching English for specific purposes, helps in identifying and reaching language learner goals so that their language skills can be purposeful and useful. For example, teaching Iraqi dialect, or even incorporating more specific dialect into Arabic language classes could help military personnel strengthen the interpersonal relationships they build with their Iraqi counterparts.

Summary

The previously mentioned limitations, recommendations for further research, and pedagogical implications by no means comprehensively address the research needs in the field of Arabic language and culture education. However, focusing on motivation research in advanced level critical language classes may help researchers and language instructors to design more effective programs, not only for our veteran population, but also for language students as a whole. Existing research has shown that incorporating language curricula throughout the K-12 level improves student performance (Eddy, 1981 & Cooper, 1987). Providing foreign languages to students throughout their K-12 education also leads to more culturally and linguistically aware recruits for our military, who may have a greater impact on our society as a whole. Lawrence, one of the veteran participants, best summarizes the wider implications of this study:
This is a new kind of war. Now we have to win the hearts and minds of the people. We can do that if we don’t know who are enemies are. We can’t do that if we don’t know how to be polite in their culture. And really can’t do that if we don’t even speak their language.

Final Remarks

This chapter presented conclusions to the research data by connecting it to the current body of research in the field of language motivation and other affective variables in the language classroom. The participants’ interview data, questionnaires, and classroom observations were made within the context of Norton’s (2000) concept of investment, Dornyei’s (1994, 1996, 2003 & 2005) work on integrative and instrumental motivating factors in the language classroom, Vygotksy’s (1981) theories on mediated learning, Lantolf and Thorne’s (2006) sociocultural theory in second language development, Gardner and Lambert’s (1972) construct of language motivation, and, finally, Allport’s (1954) contact hypothesis. Also of relevance was Norton’s (2000) work with language learning, identity formation, and culture. This study reflected previous work in motivation theory as well as reinforced conclusions and findings by Lantolf (1999), Samimy & Tabuse (1991), Husseinali (2004 & 2006), and Norton (2000) as well as others. However, it did become apparent in the data that another form of motivation was operative. I call this type of motivation “influential” motivation, which incorporates Norton’s (2000) ideas of investment, Dornyei’s work in instrumental and integrative motivation and drew on previous intercultural and linguistic interactions as influencing student decisions and motivations in language learning.
Pedagogical implications include 1) recognizing the gap in qualitative research at advanced levels of proficiency in critical and less commonly taught languages; b) providing incentives to include critical and less commonly taught language education throughout K-12; c) expanding research into the psychological issues of academic achievement for veteran students because their impact on our society in the past has been considerable through their civic achievement; and d) doing more to accommodate our veterans Arabic language education within the four-year model. Additional research and development is needed in all of these areas.

Several factors motivated this study. First, in 2005 I experienced an influx of veteran students into the Arabic language classes at the time. The general number of veterans in my Arabic classes since then has steadily increased. Second, in teaching veteran students, I found Norton’s (2000) work with identity shift and investment in language learning to be of relevance when they were deployed and in the classroom. And third, though the increase in enrollment in Arabic language and culture classes over the last several years has nearly tripled, research in Arabic language learning motivation has not. My research has seemed timely and informative but more expanded research is desperately needed.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM
The Ohio State University Consent to Participate in Research

Motivation and Affective Variables in Arabic Language Learning for Iraq War Veterans: Language learning experiences inside and outside the classroom

Jennifer L. Nichols, PhD Candidate, OSU

Dr. Keiko Samimy, Associate Professor, OSU

This is a consent form for research participation. It contains important information about this study and what to expect if you decide to participate.

Your participation is voluntary.

Please consider the information carefully. Feel free to ask questions before making your decision whether or not to participate. If you decide to participate, you will be asked to sign this form and will receive a copy of the form.

Purpose:

The purpose of this study is to describe and examine Iraq War Veterans’ views of the language barrier they experienced while serving in Iraq and their subsequent Arabic language training since they have returned to the US. Subjects will be asked about their language learning motivations and language barrier issues they encountered while they served in Iraq (see attached focus group question) and their language learning experiences in the classroom. Additionally, participants will be asked to elaborate on their motivations in learning about Arabic language and culture and the role this will play in their academic goals. Participants will be given questions in advance and will be asked to discuss their answers in one-on-one interviews and focus group setting for approximately one hour. The final product, their answers to the interview questions, will be used as a pilot study for possible dissertation research. No names or any other identifying information will be released in order to maintain maximum confidentiality. No personal questions will be asked other than the dates that they were physically stationed in Iraq, basic demographic data and their experiences with the language barrier there as well as subsequent reasons for taking Arabic at OSU.

Procedures/Tasks:

Focus Group interview, or one-on-one interview & one classroom observation

Duration: 3X30min – 90min (total 1.5-4hours)

You may leave the study at any time. If you decide to stop participating in the study, there will be no penalty to you, and you will not lose any benefits to which you are
otherwise entitled. Your decision will not affect your future relationship with The Ohio State University.

Confidentiality:

Efforts will be made to keep your study-related information confidential. However, there may be circumstances where this information must be released. For example, personal information regarding your participation in this study may be disclosed if required by state law (DOES NOT APPLY). Also, your records may be reviewed by the following groups (as applicable to the research):

- Office for Human Research Protections or other federal, state, or international regulatory agencies (DOES NOT APPLY);
- The Ohio State University Institutional Review Board or Office of Responsible Research Practices;
- The sponsor, if any, or agency (including the Food and Drug Administration for FDA-regulated research) supporting the study (DOES NOT APPLY).

Incentives:

Free Arabic Tutoring

Participant Rights:

You may refuse to participate in this study without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. If you are a student or employee at Ohio State, your decision will not affect your grades or employment status.

If you choose to participate in the study, you may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits. By signing this form, you do not give up any personal legal rights you may have as a participant in this study.

An Institutional Review Board responsible for human subjects research at The Ohio State University reviewed this research project and found it to be acceptable, according to applicable state and federal regulations and University policies designed to protect the rights and welfare of participants in research.

Contacts and Questions:
For questions, concerns, or complaints about the study you may contact Jennifer Nichols 614-404-6001 or Dr. Keiko Samimy (samimy.2@osu.edu).

For questions about your rights as a participant in this study or to discuss other study-related concerns or complaints with someone who is not part of the research team, you may contact Ms. Sandra Meadows in the Office of Responsible Research Practices at 1-800-678-6251.
**Signing the consent form**

I have read (or someone has read to me) this form and I am aware that I am being asked to participate in a research study. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

I am not giving up any legal rights by signing this form. I will be given a copy of this form.

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**Investigator/Research Staff**

I have explained the research to the participant or his/her representative before requesting the signature(s) above. There are no blanks in this document. A copy of this form has been given to the participant or his/her representative.

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<th>AM/PM</th>
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<td>Date and time</td>
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APPENDIX B

VETERAN PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE
Questionnaire: Please provide written responses to the questions below. These will be the same general questions that we will cover in our one-on-one interview and/or focus group interview. Again, thank you for your participation!

Name: _______________________________

Contact information:
Cell Phone ___________________________
Email: _______________________________
Address: _____________________________
_____________________________

*Note: All respondent information will be kept completely confidential and will not be published. The information above will be used only in case there are follow-up questions.

Demographic Data:

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<td>□ 25-30</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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</tr>
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<td>□ Other __________</td>
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<tr>
<td>Previous Foreign Language coursework or training?</td>
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<td>□ No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If Yes, please elaborate</td>
</tr>
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Questions: (For interviews and focus groups as well)

A. Where were you stationed in Iraq?

B. Did you use or learn any Arabic in Iraq? In what way did you use the language?

C. What were your responsibilities when you were stationed in Iraq?
D. Did you have any previous Arabic language or Arab culture training before you were deployed?

E. How difficult was the language barrier to accomplishing your daily tasks while in Iraq?
F. Are you taking Arabic now and if so, why?
APPENDIX C

COMPLETE PARTICIPANT OVERVIEW
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Military Branch</th>
<th>Active (A)</th>
<th>Pre-service language experience (Y/N)</th>
<th>Job Description during Deployment</th>
<th>Level of Arabic Studied – Informal (0)</th>
<th>Future Language/Culture Use in Education/Career? (Y/N)</th>
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<td>Y</td>
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<td>Joseph</td>
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Class Observation Notes
(Adapted from Wajnryb, 1992)

Pre-Observation Notes
Instructor: ________________________________________
Participant Name: ________________________________________
Time and Place: __________________________________________

Arabic Class Level: ________________________________________

Location and Classroom Environment (number of students, room set up; etc):
__________________________________________________________

Lesson Plan/Lesson Goals of observed class:
- 
- 
- 
- 

Notes on Instructor:
- 
- 

Notes on other students in class:
- 
- 

Observation Notes (see Table)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Lesson/Activity (Grammar, Listening, Reading, Writing, Lecture)</th>
<th>Materials Used</th>
<th>Observed Student Participation (#)</th>
<th>Intercultural Interactions with other Students</th>
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<tr>
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<td>A. Where were you stationed in Iraq?</td>
<td>Participant Name</td>
<td>Participant Name</td>
<td>Participant Name</td>
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<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
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<td>B. Did you use or learn any Arabic in Iraq? In what way did you use the language?</td>
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<td>C. What were your responsibilities when you were stationed in Iraq?</td>
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<td>D. Did you have any previous Arabic language or Arab culture training before you were deployed?</td>
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<td>E. How difficult was the language barrier to accomplishing your daily tasks while in Iraq?</td>
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<td>F. Are you taking Arabic now and if so, why?</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Date of Focus Group Interview: ________________________

Recording File Name: _________________________________