

THE LIVED EXPERIENCES OF CHRISTIAN MISSIONARIES WHO NEED TO LEARN A
FOREIGN LANGUAGE TO FULFILL A CALL TO SERVE IN IMMERSED SETTINGS:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY

by

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Liberty University

A Dissertation Presented in Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of Christian missionaries living immersed cross-culturally who need to learn a foreign language in order to fulfill a Christian vocational calling. The theories guiding this study were Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory as pertains to the social aspects and interactions of immersion in second language acquisition. This study was important in offering support and guidance in the ongoing understanding of second language acquisition, in particular to individuals who have answered the Christian call to missions (Dixon et al., 2012; Price, 2013). This study utilized a qualitative transcendental phenomenological design and purposeful convenience sampling of participants who are living immersed globally. The central question guiding this research was: What are the experiences of Christians living in an immersed setting in a foreign country who need to learn a foreign language in order to fulfill a Christian calling? Data collection occurred via open-ended questionnaires, online discussion forums, and personal semi-structured interviews. Analysis of data followed the transcendental phenomenological analysis format by Moustakas (1994). The information collected described the experiences Christian missionaries encountered living immersed who need to learn a foreign language to fulfill a call to serve.

Keywords: second language acquisition, service learning, study abroad, Christian calling, missionaries, foreign language

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Dedication

This paper is dedicated to my precious family: Mark, Hailee, Morgan, and Marshall. The countless ways you have supported me during this journey have imprinted on my heart. Your small acts of kindness, love, humor, and encouragement have carried me through these pages. Hailee, Morgan, and Marshall- It is my greatest honor to be your mother. I hope you have learned by my example the life lessons of persistence, dedication, and relying on God for strength and wisdom. You are all my greatest treasures here on this Earth.

To my mother and father, your emphasis on education throughout my life started this journey. Thank you for instilling this passion in me. Mom, you always pushed education and I know you had no idea I would take it this far. Dad, I cannot wait to share with you all about this journey; but in the meantime, enjoy heaven until I get there to tell you.

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List of Abbreviations

Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

Study Abroad (SA)

Service Learning (SL)

Second Language (L2)

Research Question (RQ)

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Overview

As Christian missionaries accept the call to serve in various parts of the world, the need to learn a foreign language is a necessary component for success (Action International Ministries, 2015). However, Verwer (2003) related that some difficulties occur for Christian missionaries. Verwer listed difficulties in language acquisition and cultural adaptation as one of the top ten reasons missionaries leave the mission field. Second language acquisition can be challenging for learners and a greater challenge for many more than anticipated. A lack of research exists to describe this journey and relate these experiences as told by the Christian missionaries themselves. This chapter provides the background context of the research problem, the situation to self, detailing the motivation for the research, problem statement, and purpose statement. The significance of the study, research questions, research plan, delimitations, and definitions are included in this chapter.

Background

Christian missionaries work to spread the Gospel. Sunquist (2013) defined missionary as “an apostle, one who is sent from the heart of God to proclaim the present and coming Kingdom of God to all nations of the earth” (p.8). Jesus Christ said in Matthew 28:19 to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (NIV).

Going out into all nations as Christian missionaries to spread the Gospel requires the ability to communicate in the native language of the nation. Culbertson (2015) listed learning to speak the language of the community missionaries are serving as the third of 10 qualities to a biblical model for missions. Culbertson stated that “if you want to understand the ‘soul’ of a

people, one must be able to speak their language or at least understand it” (p.1). This understanding of the soul is vital when communicating the Gospel to others.

Christian missionaries who accept the call to spread the Gospel in their non-native and cultural lands encounter issues in second language acquisition. Second language acquisition (SLA) is a topic of interest to many foreign language educators (Dixon et al., 2012). Throughout the SLA process, learners typically engage in either a study abroad or service learning programs. Study abroad is a program in which learners live and study in their non-native culture and language in order to further their language studies (Wang, 2010). Service learning allows learners to engage actively in the culture and language by acts of community service in order to acquire a second language (Medina & Gordon, 2014). Study abroad and service learning are both types of learning in context with the culture during the second language acquisition process (Bataller, 2010).

Some Christians receive the call to full-time vocational ministry (Price, 2013). Answering the call to vocational ministry may lead Christians to other countries from their native language and culture. The need to learn a foreign language in order to fulfill this calling is one need in which many Christian missionaries live and experience. Oh and Meiring (2009) found that many missionaries realized that second language acquisition and cultural immersion issues are difficult. They believed that Christian missionaries must “overcome these difficulties for their ministry to be effective and dynamic over time” (Oh & Meiring, 2009, p. 45).

The Christian call to serve in ministry and mission work comes with rewards and challenges. According to Action International Ministries (2015), two of the top four challenges missionaries face are the need to be fluent in one or more languages, as well as adjusting to foreign culture, people, and surroundings. Missionaries choose to work in these challenging

environments because they are answering a call (Cousineau, Hall, Rosik, & Hall, 2010; Price, 2013). In the case of Christian missionaries, this is a call into full-time ministry (Cousineau et al., 2010; Price, 2013). The need to learn a foreign language in order to fulfill this calling for missionaries who are living in their non-native land, culture, and language is one area in which this research aimed to describe and relate the stories surrounding this phenomenon.

Cousineau et al. (2010) identified one of the important contributing factors to missionary success as the ability to do the work that supports their calling. Language acquisition is an integral step that allows missionaries the ability to communicate in the language and understand the culture in order to fulfill their calling (Action International Ministries, 2015; Culbertson, 2015; Oh & Meiring, 2009). Difficulties in second language acquisition can lead to discouragement and become a barrier in fulfilling a missionary's calling and result in leaving the mission field (Verwer, 2003). The need to understand this phenomenon will enable Christian mission organizations to better support missionaries in their language barrier and calling.

The various ways in which learners acquire a second language are documented throughout literature (Bataller, 2010; Dixon et al., 2012). Several factors contributing to SLA such as direct contact time with the language, characteristics of successful and unsuccessful learners, and length of time learners need to acquire proficiency are analyzed (Bataller, 2010; Dixon et al., 2012). Findings indicated that issues such as the availability of bilingual education and/or content-based instruction, as well as socioeconomic status of the learner all contribute to SLA in regards to the direct contact time with the language (Bahrani, Sim, & Nekoueizadeh, 2014; Dixon et al., 2012). The characteristics that contribute to determining success in SLA for the learner include factors such as motivation, anxiety, aptitude and the learners own native language skills (Bataller, 2010; Dixon et al., 2012). Finally, the research conveyed that the

length of time learners need to acquire proficiency depends greatly on age of arrival into the language, prior education, language learning setting, and hours of instruction (Bahrani et al., 2014; Dewey, Bown, & Eggett, 2012; Diao, Freed, & Smith, 2011; Dixon et al., 2012).

Study abroad (SA) and service learning (SL) shed light on second language acquisition (Bataller, 2010; Diao et al., 2011; Du, 2013; Wang, 2010). Research has focused on oral proficiency skills attained, length of stay in SA and language linguistic gains, and individual learner differences while living immersed in a study abroad and/or service learning programs (Bataller, 2010; Diao et al., 2011; Du, 2013; Wang, 2010). Findings indicated that learners benefit from these types of SA experiences and show gains in oral proficiency and language linguistic gains. However, Wang (2010) noted that short-term SA programs show little change in oral proficiency and language linguistic gains. Results show that a minimum of one semester needs to occur in order to attain functional advanced levels of oral proficiency when studying abroad (Wang, 2010). Finally, the individual learner differences such as frustrations and motivations in second language acquisition during the study abroad experience existed (Stewart, 2010; Wang, 2010).

Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory suggested, "learners reach new levels of development by obtaining mediation from others who have already mastered the task" (Dixon et al., 2012, p. 34). Socio-cultural theory is important to SLA because new learners must rely on the proficiency of native language speakers to help gain mastery of the desired language (Dixon et al., 2012; Willis Allen, 2010). Often in immersed settings, second language learners must interact with those around them in their learning environments and culture in order to acquire the language (Dixon et al., 2012; Willis Allen, 2010).

The cultural and social interactions in the learning environment lead to learners observing

and modeling language as discussed in Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. Bandura related, "much social learning occurs on the basis of casual or directed observation of other people in everyday situations" (p.70). The linguistic observations that learners have result in modeling language in the social environment (Bandura, 1986). Modeling and observing language occurs naturally for second language learners living immersed in their non-native culture.

The point of view of the learner was pertinent in this study, and research from a socio-cultural context assists in examining how and what affects SLA (Dixon et al., 2012). In understanding SLA, it is essential for all to understand and ensure "the social and cultural context is taken into account" (Dixon et al., 2012, p. 49). The exploration of the Christian missionary's need to learn a foreign language to fulfill the call to serve described both social and cultural interactions within their surroundings.

Situation to Self

I am a Christian foreign language educator of Spanish with over 15 years of experience. I have a Bachelor of Arts and a Master of Arts from Marshall University and studied Spanish abroad at La Universidad de Nebrija in Madrid, Spain. During this time, I lived with a Spanish family who spoke no English, leaving me fully immersed in the Spanish language. I understand this setting of language learning. However, I had over 18 hours of Spanish coursework before traveling abroad to live immersed, so I was not completely new to the language. For this reason, I bracketed my own personal experiences and assumptions that may have influenced how I viewed the data during this study and research (Moustakas, 1994). The assumptions that I brought to the study are the difficulties in SLA and cultural immersion experiences that participants may describe and experience personally.

My experiences of living abroad with a Spanish family were very exciting, which soon translated into a strong sense of survival. Survival to get around, to communicate if lost, to know what I was eating, to understand directions, to understand what was being said around me; all were immediate communication needs. I kept a journal of my time in Spain and wrote daily of my encounters with the Spanish people and culture. This journal gives insight into my personal experiences while learning a second language.

One initial feeling that I encountered while learning a language overseas was loneliness. After the initial excitement of living in such a wonderful country like Spain had worn off, I was lonely, despite the fact that I lived with a kind and loving family. The truth was that initially I was not able to communicate fully with them. Several times, there existed confusion and frustration as I kindly tried to navigate the cultural and language waters of communication. This occurred in simple tasks such as understanding what I was eating for dinner, what time to eat dinner, and how the kitchen was culturally the domain of the Spanish mother and thus, off-limits. I was also unable to share about myself and I purposefully limited conversations to those in which I felt comfortable engaging in based on my language skills. However, out of the loneliness, frustration, and discouragement came the joy of the ability to communicate. After my language study at the university, my time actively trying to speak, and my purposeful engagement in the culture, my language proficiency grew and I was having conversations with ease and enjoying the culture. My understanding of the culture and people of Spain grew as my language proficiency levels grew. This resulted in joy and happiness that I was then able to communicate in a meaningful way with my Spanish friends and family.

I viewed this research via a social constructivism paradigm and Christian worldview. As a Christian foreign language educator; a Christian worldview is at the heart of what I do every

day and is the very root of this research. A Christian worldview is “an articulation of the basic beliefs embedded in a shared grand story that are rooted in a faith commitment that give shape and direction to the whole our individual and corporate lives” (Goheen & Bartholomew, 2008, p. 23). A Christian worldview was applicable for this research based upon the nature of describing the Christian calling and relating the lived experiences of Christian missionaries. I believe in the value of second language acquisition and am interested in understanding and describing the experiences individuals have when learning a foreign language. Since I am a Spanish professor at a Christian University, I am particularly interested in these shared experiences for Christians as they fulfill their callings.

Another paradigm I viewed my research within is social constructivism. Social constructivism is when “individuals seek understanding of the world in which they live and work” (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). In this research, the goal was to “rely as much as possible on the participants’ view of the situation” (Creswell, 2013, p. 25). Since, I am not a missionary serving overseas, nor have I been called to serve in a capacity of Christian missions in the traditional sense, my research relied on the views and experiences of Christian missionaries, and how they needed to learn a foreign language to fulfill their calling. This paradigm guided my methodological decisions in that the type of questions I asked were purposeful, such as open-ended, in order to listen to the cultural and language interactions and lived experiences of Christian missionaries.

Problem Statement

Previous research revealed that there are many challenges and benefits for second language learners engaged in the culture when living immersed in a non-native country (Du, 2013; Goldini, 2013; Kinginger, 2011; Medina & Gordon, 2014). Many have examined ways to

enhance language learning by means of study abroad and living in non-native immersed settings (Gesinski, English, & Tyson, 2010; Kinginger, 2011; Lindseth, 2010). Research in second language acquisition has investigated the foreign language learner's motivation for learning a second language and the challenges of study abroad (Gesinski et al., 2010; Kinginger, 2011; Lindseth, 2010). However, research has not explored the lived experiences of Christians immersed in the language who need to learn a foreign language in order to fulfill their Christian calling to share the word of God with the cultural group in which they are called to do so (Ko-Yin, 2013; Wesley, 2009; Willis Allen, 2010). Additionally, there is little recent research to address the challenges that Christian missionaries have in the need to be fluent in another language (Oh & Meiring, 2009; Action International Ministries, 2015). The problem is that a lack of research exists to describe the lived experiences in second language acquisition that Christian missionaries have when living in an immersed setting to fulfill their calling.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of non-native Christian missionaries and their need to learn a foreign language living in an immersed non-native setting in order to fulfill their Christian calling. The central question of this study was: What are the experiences of Christians living in an immersed setting in a foreign country who need to learn a foreign language in order to fulfill a Christian calling? At this stage in the research, the Christian need to learn a foreign language will be generally defined as a lived experience in the culture in order to learn a foreign language because of a desire to fulfill a calling by God. The theories guiding and framing this study were Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. Social aspects and

interactions in second language acquisition during cultural immersion in a non-native homeland were central in describing the experiences of the participants.

Significance of the Study

The significance of this transcendental phenomenological study was to offer support and guidance in the ongoing understanding of second language acquisition, in particular to those individuals who have answered the Christian call to missions (Dixon et al., 2012; Price, 2013). This study will be of significance to Christian missionaries and mission organizations seeking to send new missionaries overseas with a better understanding of second language learning and what the process entails. Additionally, this study will serve Christian institutions of higher education who train and encourage Christians to pursue global missions. The findings will also provide insight to individuals who need to learn a foreign language to fulfill their calling.

This study is useful on a wider scale to assist other areas of individuals answering a different Christian calling and need to learn a foreign language in order to communicate effectively to do so. This study will benefit the body of literature surrounding Christian missionaries and their predictors of success as well as support services needed (Cousineau et al., 2010). Service learning programs will also benefit from this study and the need to “analyze factors that may affect learners’ pragmatic development abroad” (Bataller, 2010, p. 173). This study will add to the limited existing literature on Christian missionaries, their struggles, and joys in SLA in order to fulfill their Christian callings. Lastly, this study will add to the existing literature on foreign language learning by exploring the area of SLA in non-native immersion settings based upon the cultural and linguistic interactions of Christian missionaries interacting with the culture and surroundings around them.

Research Questions

The purpose of this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the lived experiences of Christians who need to learn a foreign language in order to fulfill a Christian calling during cultural immersion in a non-native homeland. The theoretical frameworks that guided the research questions were Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. Both are important to the research and understanding of second language acquisition for Christian missionaries living immersed in a non-native homeland. The central question of this study sought to answer:

What are the experiences of Christians living in an immersed setting in a foreign country who need to learn a foreign language in order to fulfill a Christian calling?

Second language learners living in an immersed setting have experiences with the language and culture (Bataller, 2010; Cousineau et al., 2010; Stewart, 2010). Christians have these experiences and others when they need to learn a foreign language while living in an immersed setting to fulfill their Christian calling (Bataller, 2010; Cousineau et al., 2010; Stewart, 2010). Areas guiding these experiences may include cultural exposure and understanding, as well as, issues in language acquisition. Cultural exposure occurs in immersed settings and this exposure leads to experiences in the culture (Cousineau et al., 2010; Hoke & Taylor, 2009, Oh & Meiring, 2009; Sills, 2008). Social and cultural interactions lead to language development from observation and modeling as well as obtaining language from the native or expert speaker (Bandura, 1986; Vygotsky, 1978).

The following research sub-questions support the central question:

1. What role does calling play for Christian missionaries in learning a foreign language in an immersed setting?

Motivation to learn a foreign language in immersed settings is a key role in second language acquisition to success (Mendez Lopez & Pena Aguilar, 2013; Willis Allen, 2010). This question will assist in understanding the role of calling for Christian missionaries as they seek to spread the Gospel (Sills, 2008). Additionally, this will help establish the depth of what calling means to Christian missionaries and the impact it has on factors contributing to fulfilling their call to missions (Sills, 2008).

2. What challenges do Christian missionaries in immersed settings experience in the need to learn a foreign language?

Factors such as challenges can contribute to success in second language acquisition (Stewart, 2010; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004). This question seeks to identify what challenges, if any, exist in the lived experiences of Christians learning a foreign language to fulfill their calling (Stewart, 2010; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004). Additionally, this question will assist in describing what cultural challenges exist for Christian missionaries (Hoke & Taylor, 2009; Skreslet, 2012; Sills, 2008). Describing these challenges will assist future Christian missionaries and organizations in understanding this important aspect of mission life (Cousineau et al., 2010).

3. What coping strategies do Christians employ in the need to learn a foreign language?

In second language acquisition, learners employ strategies for success (Stewart, 2010). This question seeks to identify what coping strategies and management methods are used, if any, by Christians missionaries learning a foreign language to fulfill their calling live, use, and experience (Cousineau et al., 2010; Stewart, 2010; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004). Research established predictors for success for Christian missionaries (Cousineau et al., 2010). However, Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory related how important self-regulatory capabilities are

for mastering tasks. The investigation of these strategies, if existing, will be important to describe the lived experiences completely.

Research Plan

The research utilized a qualitative transcendental phenomenological design in order to describe the shared experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2013). Participants were selected by purposeful sampling (Moustakas, 1994). These participants lived immersed globally in various different countries. Data was collected via an open-ended questionnaire, online discussion forum questions, and semi-structured interviews. I analyzed data by horizontalization of the data, finding the themes, and creating a textural and structural description of the phenomenon derived from data triangulation (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The combination of the textural and structural descriptions created a written description of the overall essence of the phenomenon analyzed in triangulation as outlined in the process for transcendental phenomenology research (Moustakas, 1994). Finally, trustworthiness of the findings increased through data triangulation, peer debriefing, an external auditor and audit trail (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). This process and technique ensured that “credible findings and interpretations will be produced” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 301).

Delimitations

Delimitations are “factors that affect the study over which the research generally does have some degree of control” (Baron, 2008, p. 5). The delimitations in this study included the decision to limit time abroad in the immersed setting for the participants from three months to two years. Additionally, participants were Christian missionaries serving traditional (church-related) Christian missions, and limiting the age to adults over the age of 18. The reason for the decision to limit time abroad in an immersed setting was that the longer the time in the immersed

country and language the experiences could be different. Limiting the age to adults over the age of 18 could affect the study because children under 18 may participate in formal schooling and receive instruction in the target foreign language of which an adult would not. Lastly, limiting participants selected to those Christian missionaries who are living abroad with the purpose of being Christian missionaries vocationally and not gainfully employed in the local language and culture on neither a part-time nor a full-time basis. This decision was because traditional Christian missionaries living immersed will not receive the additional language exposure and possible training that one employed may experience.

Definitions

1. *Second Language Acquisition (SLA)* - the process by which learners acquire a second language apart from their own native language (Dixon et al., 2010).
2. *Study Abroad (SA)* – programs in which learners participate living and studying abroad in order to further their language studies (Wang, 2010).
3. *Service Learning (SL)* - the opportunity to learn abroad by actively participating in a type of community service with the culture in order to acquire language skills (Medina & Gordon, 2014).
4. *Christian Missionary*- a person who is answering the call to fulfill the commandment in Matthew 28:19 to “go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (NIV).
5. *Mission Field*- is a common expression to convey the location or place by which missionaries fulfill their calling (Easum, 2001).
6. *Immersed Setting*- a setting in which one is living fully in a culture and language different from their own native one (Kinging, 2011).

7. *Calling*- a construct by which individuals “feel summoned or called to enter a particular career or life role” (Galles & Lenz, 2013, p. 241).

Summary

The background of second language acquisition is both practical in the interest of oral proficiency skills as well as theoretical in how individuals learn in context with the culture around them (Dixon et al., 2010). Service learning and study abroad programs offer foreign language learners the opportunity to experience the culture with all of the challenges and rewards of SLA (Bataller, 2010; Mendez Lopez & Pena Aguilar, 2013; Willis Allen, 2010). This chapter outlined the background, problem, research questions supported by the literature, and purpose of this study that sought to describe the lived experiences of Christian missionaries living immersed who need to learn a foreign language in order to fulfill their calling.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Overview

Christian missionaries living abroad immersed in a foreign language and culture experience aspects of second language acquisition (Oh & Meiring, 2009). Christian missionaries who live immersed experience a need to learn a foreign language to fulfill their callings (Oh & Meiring, 2009). These experiences occur with the culture and people with whom they interact (Oh & Meiring, 2009). In order to understand fully this need for Christian missionaries, it is important to explore Christian missions and the history of Christian missions further as well as second language acquisition.

Second language acquisition is not unique to Christian missionaries who need to learn a foreign language living abroad. Second language acquisition is an area of interest for foreign language educators and those desiring to learn a second language. Research has reviewed many different aspects of second language acquisition over the years (Bahrani et al., 2014; Dixon et al., 2012).

Different programs beyond the regular classroom exist to take second language acquisition further such as service learning and study abroad programs. These programs researched areas such as development, immersion experiences, and learner motivation (Bataller, 2010; Dewey et al., 2012; Diao et al., 2011; Goldini, 2013; Medina & Gordon, 2013; Willis Allen, 2010). This chapter will review the literature in the context of five main categories: Christian missionaries and history of missions, the Christian calling, second language acquisition in study abroad programs, service learning, and Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theoretical framework. These areas will give background for understanding the importance of researching the need to learn a foreign language for Christian missionaries to fulfill their calling.

Theoretical Framework

Vygotsky's (1962, 1978) socio-cultural theory and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory are foundational in this research. Both theories invest heavily in learning from the social environment. Vygotsky's (1962, 1978) emphasis on leaning from the expert in social and cultural interactions and Bandura's (1986) insights on learners learning via observation and modeling in the social contexts are frameworks explained in this chapter.

Socio-Cultural Theory

Vygotsky (1962, 1978) was a Russian psychologist whose theory of how learners interact with the culture around them in social communication has received much attention in the area of second language acquisition. The idea that humans learn best by doing and performing actions in the culture are foundational in Vygotsky's (1962, 1978) socio-cultural theory. Vygotsky (1978) stated that "human learning presupposes a specific social nature" (p. 88). Vygotsky's (1962, 1978) socio-cultural theory utilizes a social oriented approach, which is different from the individual approach of other learning theorists in the field. This difference as described by Cortazzi and Hall (1998) as "a shift away from more 'individualist' theories of learning, such as those of Piaget, to the more socially oriented ideas" (p. 17).

Vygotsky's socio-cultural theory has multiple components in learning (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). A key component in the Vygotsky (1962, 1978) approach to learning is foundational from the social or cultural constructs. This occurs by utilizing language and social interactions in activity (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). Lin (2012) conveyed, "Vygotsky sought to understand the relations among language, mind, and culture by starting with the social world" (p. 45). Vygotsky (1962) related that language is highly social function and relational to the culture surrounding the learner.

The cultural impact on learning is very important (Daniels, 2005; Dixon et al., 2012; Lin, 2012). According to Turk (2008), “Vygotsky advocates that the role of a psychologist should be to understand how human social and mental activity is organized through culturally constructed artifacts” (p. 246). The uniqueness of learning by the cultural surrounding and interactions is a key characteristic of Vygotsky’s (1962, 1978) approach. These components of the theory are important for psychologists, theorists, and educators to acknowledge when utilizing the socio-cultural theory by Vygotsky (Lin, 2012; Miller, 2011; Schinke-Llano, 1993; Turuk, 2008).

Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-cultural approach regarding foreign language learning and second language acquisition interests foreign language educators. Vygotsky (1978) related that language demonstration is a social process. Gao (2013) explained that utilizing the Vygotskian socio-cultural theory in SLA encourages educators involved in second language education and learning to think outside the classroom to get students involved in the target culture. Vygotsky (1962) suggested that “in foreign language study, attention centers on the exterior, social, physical aspects” (p. 110). This exterior relies on the culture and social aspects in second language acquisition (Vygotsky, 1962). Gao (2013) suggested that this is achieved by utilizing important cultural activities to engage second language learners in language usage.

Vygotsky (1962, 1978) is credited with the idea of zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky (1978) defined ZPD as “the distance between the actual development level as determined by the independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (p. 86). The ZPD is when learning occurs when the learner interacts with an individual possessing not only qualifying skills but also is the expert on the topic being learned by the learner and shared by the expert (Vygotsky, 1978). This allows the expert, teacher, or guide to

lay the groundwork or scaffold what is learned and provides a more meaningful way for guiding learners (Vygotsky, 1978).

Vygotsky (1978) demonstrated the importance of the zone of proximal development. He related, “what is the zone of proximal development today will be the actual development level tomorrow” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 87). Vygotsky (1978) referred to this process of learning as mediation. Gao (2013) related, “Vygotsky regards language as an external tool to children used in social interaction” (p. 106). Thus, second language learners, according to Vygotsky’s (1978) socio-cultural theory, obtain SLA skills by interacting with speakers that are more advanced.

The focus on social and cultural interactions in Vygotsky’s (1962, 1978) socio-cultural theory has drawn attention to how second language communication can occur within cultural and social aspects of second language acquisition (Dixon et al., 2012; Schinke-Llano, 1993; Turuk, 2008). In the second language acquisition learning environment, social aspects, and interactions are crucial to communication (Turuk, 2008). Turuk (2008) emphasized the importance of these interactions and emphasized, “social uses of language according to context, which tally with Vygotsky’s ideas of the role of language as a social tool for communication” (p. 254).

Mediation and scaffolding are vital elements in the socio-cultural theory of second language acquisition (Vygotsky, 1978). Mediation is the process by which learners utilize processes “that do not lie within the immediate visual field” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 26). Utilizing fields beyond the immediate in second language acquisition requires learners to rely on social and cultural for acquisition (Turuk, 2008). Scaffolding is a building block process by which each learned experience builds on the next (Behroozizad et al., 2014; Turuk, 2008). Behroozizad et al. (2014) suggested that scaffolding, collaboration, and interactions are foundational in the socio-cultural approach in second language acquisition. This focus on collaboration and

interactions both socially and culturally are beneficial in SLA learning (Schinke-Llano, 1993; Turuk, 2008). Schinke-Llano (1993) suggested that educators invested in the field of SLA should utilize Vygotsky's (1978) theory to the fullest potential for the benefit of learners.

Vygotsky's (1962, 1978) socio-cultural theory has been a theory in which educators have particular interest (Lin, 2012; Miller, 2011). The area of second language acquisition and the role that socio-cultural theory has in learning is worthy of consideration (Turuk, 2008). Wen-Chuan Lin (2012) suggested that the Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory has "challenged the mind/society dualism and brought culture back to the centre of inquiry" (p. 57). This challenge has resulted in many recent studies regarding second language acquisition and Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory.

Social contexts can have implications on learning in second language acquisition (Lin, 2012). In a recent study, Lin (2012) found that the more English as a second language learners interacted with the culture and context around them the more language that they acquired. The culture and context in particular included native or expert speakers (Lin, 2012). This finding and study is a direct reflection of Vygotsky's (1962, 1978) socio-cultural theory (Lin, 2012).

Vygotsky's (1962, 1978) socio-cultural theory is an important part of second language acquisition research and study (Behroozizad et al., 2014; Cortazzi & Hall, 1998; Dixon et al., 2012; Lin, 2012; Turuk, 2008; Schinke-Llano, 1993; Van Compernelle & Williams, 2013;; Wang, 2010). The idea that language occurs by an acquiring process through social and cultural interactions, as well as obtaining language from the expert, are foundational pieces of Vygotsky's (1962, 1978) socio-cultural theory. Understanding and describing the Christian missionaries' need to learn a foreign language to fulfill their calling will be framed by Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory. Vygotsky's (1978) trademarks of scaffolding and

communication in language and culture guide the research in this study. Another theory guiding this research is Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory.

Social Cognitive Theory

Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory extends "beyond issues of learning" (p. xii). Bandura (2002) defined social cognitive theory as "three modes of agency: personal agency exercised individually; proxy agency in which people secure desired outcomes by influencing others to act on their behalf; and collective agency in which people act in concert to shape their future" (p. 269). Regarding these modes, Bandura (2002) stated that all "are needed to make it through the day whatever the cultural context in which one resides" (p. 269). These cultural and social interactions are important to this research that seeks to understand the need to learn a foreign language for Christian missionaries.

Learners in social and cultural situations find themselves seeking the assistance or expertise of others to navigate the interaction (Bandura, 2002). The modeling behavior of others in social interactions aids in the learning process (Bandura, 1986). This is contingent in many ways upon the learners' adaptation within the social interaction that may affect learning (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (2002) stated, "social cognitive theory is well suited to elucidate human personal development, adaptation, and change in diverse cultural milieus" (p. 271). Adaptation in cross-cultural situations is important for learners because "cultures are diverse and dynamic social systems" (Bandura, 2002, p. 275).

It is within these social systems that learners not only interact with the culture but also observe the desired learning outcome (Bandura, 1986). According to Bandura (1986), "much social learning is fostered by observing the actual performances of others" (p. 47). Without these social interactions and observations, it is hard to determine how development occurs within

cross-cultural settings (Bandura, 2002). The actions of others observed by the learning can result in “acquired cognitive skills” (Bandura, 1986, p. 49). In second language acquisition for Christian missionaries living immersed in non-native homelands, social interactions occur to facilitate observations.

During these moments of observations, modeling occurs for the learner in obtaining the desired outcome (Bandura, 1986). Modeling and observing are often synonymous in social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (2002) stated, “modeling is a universalized human capacity but how it is used varies in different cultural milieus” (p. 273). The cultures of the specific expert as well as the learner are important in how the modeling process takes place in observations.

Lastly, other aspects of social cognitive theory include motivation and self-regulation (Bandura, 1986). According to Bandura (2002), this is important because “a low sense of efficacy to regulate one’s own motivation and learning activities bears importantly on intellectual self-development” (p. 281). Motivation relies on intentions and goals (Bandura, 1986). Bandura (1986) said that, “in social cognitive theory, intention plays a prominent role in the self-regulation of behavior” (p. 467). This intention plays a significant role in how involved learners are during the observation and modeling aspects of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986). All of these aspects of self-regulation, motivation, observation, and modeling are intricate components of Bandura’s (1986) social cognitive theory, which frames this research. Related literature and research concerning Christian missions, second language acquisition, and Christian calling are discussed in the following section.

Related Literature

Investigating Christian missions is important to understand fully the participants in this study. Christian missions are rooted in the commandment of The Great Commission issued by Jesus Christ and span over centuries into present day (Matthew 28, NIV). Many challenges, as well as predictors, for success exist for Christian missionaries in fulfilling their call to missions. Second language acquisition is one necessary component for those called to non-native speaking countries. This section explores Christian missionaries, challenges, and second language acquisition in the literature as it pertains to this research.

Christian Missionaries and History of Missions

Understanding Christian missions begins by understanding the history of missions (Sunquist, 2013). The beginning of missions dates back in the Bible (Matthew 28, NIV; Sunquist, 2013; Terry, Smith, & Anderson, 1998). This began when Jesus Christ issued the Great Commission of “making disciples of all nations” (Matthew 28:19, NIV). This command ignited the movement of spreading the gospel and teaching of Jesus Christ. According to Terry et al. (1998), there is “a growing number of missionaries take seriously the Great Commission mandate of our Lord to disciple all the nations” (p. 30).

The mission movement often refers to recent terms but the history dates far back to ancient and medieval times as well (Sunquist, 2013; Terry et al., 1998). In the early days after the Great Commission, missionaries had a “suffering missional presence” (Sunquist, 2013, p. 27). Early Christians held beliefs in Jesus as the Son of God and as a result, often suffered ridicule and persecution (Kane, 1982; Sunquist, 2013). Many of the early church were beheaded, stoned, and/or tortured for this belief (Kane, 1982).

This ridicule and persecution led those Christians persecuted to leave their home and create new communities and followers of Jesus Christ (Kane, 1982; Sunquist, 2013; Terry et al., 1998). Persecution “did not destroy Christianity; rather, it strengthened it” (Terry et al., 1998, p. 173). The expression of mission activity of the early Christians had strong convictions and many times led to the ultimate sacrifice of losing their life (Kane, 1982; Terry et al., 1998). Kane (1982) related, “the blood of the martyrs proved to be the seed of the church” (p. 32). This early mission work was born out of suffering and resolve on behalf of the believers (Kane, 1982; Sunquist, 2013; Terry et al., 1998). Many converted to Christianity and gave up their paganism when seeing the resolve and conviction of the Christians who were persecuted (Kane, 1982).

However, mission work was not always rooted in suffering and resolve (Sunquist, 2013). During the middle ages, missions took on a new form and the monastic movement began (Sunquist, 2013; Terry et al., 1998). This movement began where individuals “sought holiness through solitude” (Terry et al., 1998, p. 177). These individuals seeking solitude developed communities that they called monasteries (Terry et al., 1998). Many monks did not want to do mission work but chose to live their lives expressly in solitude and holiness (Terry et al., 1998). Monks that were ordained usually did so because of a desire to be devoted missionaries (Terry et al., 1998). This movement resulted in the conversion of many that came to Christ who previously was pagan (Kane, 1982; Sunquist, 2013; Terry et al., 1998).

Ireland was one country in particular making important strides in missionary work during this period of time (Kane, 1982). The Irish church sent forth many missionaries into the nations to evangelize and wherever they went, they built monasteries (Kane, 1982). These monasteries were important in cultivating the Christian faith (Kane, 1982). The vast knowledge of the scriptures that Irish missionaries possessed led to their enthusiasm in converting those that lived

in heathenism (Kane, 1982). All of these movements laid the foundation for later stages in Christian mission work, such as those during the colonial period.

In colonial missions, Christianity grew into a faith that spanned the globe (Skreslet, 2012; Sunquist, 2013; Terry et al., 1998). This was specifically the “globalization of Roman Catholicism” (Sunquist, 2013, p. 42). This movement identified the first group of modern missionaries. The modern term ‘mission’ comes from the Jesuits and their influence during this time (Sunquist, 2013; Terry et al., 1998). Jesuits “were based on a new spirituality and held a new understanding of mission” (Sunquist, 2013, p. 46). However, the Jesuits did not always have a warm reception (Kane, 1982). Some Jesuits in this lack of reception, even in countries that were predominantly Roman Catholic, experienced persecution (Kane, 1982).

During the colonial time period of missions, two major aspects arose which include extending the participation of the Great Commission as part of including church participation, and the development and consideration of cultural aspects as a strategy in missions (Sunquist, 2013). This emphasis on cultural context during the colonial period of missions was an important strategy in the mission movements in Africa, Latin America, and Asia; however, mission work was also occurring in the ancient cultures of the Middle East (Sunquist, 2013; Terry et al., 1998).

The early modern mission period during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in North America requires a closer look at the early missionary work of Protestants. According to Sunquist (2013), “there is no single pattern for the evangelization of North America” (p. 75). The history of missions in North America is not one of intentional missional work itself, but of migration that lead to mission work (Sunquist, 2013; Terry et al., 1998). One common aspect of missionary work that was predominant in this time was that of Christian cultural development

and a great deal of translation work (Sunquist, 2013). This was especially important in what is present day Central America.

Protestant missions had several characteristics that they demonstrated in their missional work. One characteristic was the emphasis on understanding local religions and cultures (Skreslet, 2012; Sunquist, 2013). The belief existed that by understanding the local religion and culture, the work of the missionary would be more successful (Skreslet, 2012; Sunquist, 2013; Terry et al., 1998). This thought is still common in present day missions. Secondly, an emphasis on language study and scripture translation occurred (Sunquist, 2013; Terry et al., 1998). The foundational work in language study and its importance in mission work began in this movement (Sunquist, 2013; Terry et al., 1998). Lastly, education was an important aspect of Protestant mission work (Sunquist, 2013).

The growth in North America of mission organizations led to a greater engagement of mission work globally (Sunquist, 2013; Terry et al., 1998). According to Sunquist (2013), “new orders and societies of missionary work were inspired by renewals and awakenings” (p. 89). In North America, these awakenings took on mission work with the indigenous people and the settlers (Sunquist, 2013). This work led to many volunteers giving of their time, money, and resources for the missional cause (Sunquist, 2013; Terry et al., 1998).

In the late nineteenth century, global missions took on an additional theme of colonialism and the growth from North America (Sunquist, 2013; Terry et al., 1998). The elements of “global trading and colonialism” assisted in the missionary movement (Sunquist, 2013, p. 94). The colonialism that was taking place made work in missions possible globally (Sunquist, 2013; Terry et al., 1998). This new opportunity enabled the missions of the Christians in North America to reach further into the world.

In more recent times mission work took on a face of rebuilding (Sunquist, 2013; Terry et al., 1998). After the Second World War, it was a time of devastation for many countries and the need for assistance and aid with rebuilding became part of the missional objective (Sunquist, 2013; Terry et al., 1998). Most mission organizations maintained an understanding of mission work to “build churches, hospitals, and schools for Africa, Latin America, and Asia” (Sunquist, 2013, p. 132). Additionally, most Christian mission organizations thought it their responsibility to evangelize to all nations as Jesus Christ commanded in Matthew 28 (NIV; Sunquist, 2013; Terry et al., 1998). Despite the changing themes in Christian missions, the Great Commission still stands as a central focus of Christian missionaries today (Matthew 28, NIV).

Mission Challenges and Missionary Characteristics

Christian missionaries face many obstacles as well as rewards when leaving their native land, culture, and language to fulfill their calling. Some studies predicted the success of missionaries on the field once they begin work in their non-native environment (Cousineau et al., 2010). It is first important to understand why Christian missionaries go abroad. Cousineau et al. (2010) stated that “sending employees abroad will continue to be a priority within the Christian community as well, given the explicit directive within the biblical text to spread the gospel throughout the world” (p. 354; Matthew 28, NIV).

Christian missionaries need certain characteristics and qualities to assist them in their call to missions (Cousineau et al., 2010; Sills, 2008). One of those qualities is their ability to spread the word of God by means of communication (Cousineau et al., 2010). For many missionaries, this means a language other than their own native language (Cousineau et al., 2010). Cousineau et al. (2010) suggested that successful missionaries have “the ability to share Christ with others” (p. 357). Another trait discussed as predictors for successful missionaries is the ability to adapt

in all living situations and cultures that they will encounter (Cousineau et al., 2010). Cousineau et al. suggested that qualities of a foreign missionary candidate must have the “ability to relate to persons in other cultures” (p. 360).

In addition, Hoke and Taylor (2009) discussed other common characteristics among Christian missionaries that are sought after when seeking the vocational avenue of Christian missions. The first and foremost common characteristic is a personal spiritual formation and ministry identity (Hoke & Taylor, 2009; Skreslet, 2012; Sills, 2008). This personal spiritual foundation in missions is viewed by many as “an expression of spirituality” (Skreslet, 2012, p. 186). The understanding and spiritual relationship missionaries have with God is crucial in mission work (Hoke & Taylor, 2009). It is difficult to make disciples of nations as the Great Commission states if one is not a disciple himself (Matthew 28, NIV; Hoke & Taylor, 2009; Sills, 2008). Additionally, the characteristic of exhibiting Christ-like behavior is important for success (Hoke & Taylor, 2009; Sills, 2008).

Cultural exposure and understanding assists Christian missionaries in developing a cultural intelligence (Cousineau et al., 2010; Hoke & Taylor, 2009; Oh & Meiring, 2009; Sills, 2008). Sills (2008) advised that Christian missionaries “research the target culture and learn as much as you can before you get on the plane to go” (p. 141). This research and cultural understanding is just as important in everyday tasks and settings as it is in language abilities (Cousineau et al., 2010; Hoke & Taylor, 2009; Oh & Meiring, 2009; Sills, 2008). Oh and Meiring (2009) discussed the importance of learning the native language of the culture in which Christian missionaries are ministering.

Many Christian missionaries will need to learn numerous languages to reach the target culture and community in which they are working (Oh & Meiring, 2009). Oh and Meiring

(2009) suggested that Christian missionaries who “do not learn the language will always be excluded from a deep understanding of local culture” (p. 45). Many attend language schools in total immersion, which can be a stressful time (Sills, 2008). The feelings of stress and being overwhelmed can create a complete dependence on God for strength and endurance (Sills, 2008). The trials and difficulties in language schools are the beginning goals for the missional work of many Christian missionaries (Sills, 2008). They must be able to spread the gospel and understand the local language and culture (Oh & Meiring, 2009; Sills, 2008).

Henrichsen (2001) explored the way in which missionaries of the Church of Latter-day Saints obtained SLA. Henrichsen suggested that missionaries often realize quickly on the field that language proficiency is harder than they thought and takes longer to achieve the fluency necessary to communicate in a meaningful way. However, the need to learn a foreign language for Christian missionaries to fulfill their calling was not explored (Henrichsen, 2001).

The need to speak the target language can lead to frustration for many Christian missionaries (Sills, 2008). Simple tasks such as ordering food can be challenging and hearing native speakers speak with laughter can lead to paranoia over the fear of embarrassment for the lack of speaking abilities specifically (Sills, 2008). The fear of inability to communicate should an emergency arise also exists for many (Sills, 2008). All of these concerns and scenarios are real for Christian missionaries. The need to communicate to fulfill their Christian calling to spread the gospel requires the acquisition of a second language in not only everyday tasks, but also service.

The understanding of the human need is a real and necessary characteristic for Christian missionaries (Plake, 2014). Often times, people assume that people all over the world have the same needs (Plake, 2014). Understanding human need in the context of the culture in which

Christian missionaries are working is imperative and necessary for spreading the Gospel (Plake, 2014). This understanding not only assists Christian missionaries in fulfilling their calling but in adapting to their new cross-cultural environments intelligence (Cousineau et al., 2010; Hoke & Taylor, 2009; Oh & Meiring, 2009; Plake, 2014; Sills, 2008).

In a recent study, Plake (2014) investigated perspectives of Christian missionary effectiveness. Plake outlined a formula for effectiveness in Christian missionaries as having the following characteristics: calling, need, and ability. These suggested abilities include “familiarity with the Bible that they must be effective communicators of the gospel, and they must have at least rudimentary understanding of culture and its impact on communication” (Plake, 2014, p. 162). These last two abilities relate significantly to the Christian missionaries need to learn a foreign language in order to fulfill their calling.

Christian missionaries receive the call to spread the gospel (Cousineau et al., 2010). This calling may lead them to non-native countries, which will require the acquisition of a second or third language as well as the ability to adapt culturally (Cousineau et al., 2010; Plake, 2014). It is vital to remember the importance of the need to learn a foreign language in order to spread the gospel in non-native immersed settings (Cousineau et al., 2010). The endeavor of understanding the need of second language acquisition is worthy of consideration for many foreign language educators, but especially Christian missionaries living abroad.

Second Language Acquisition

Second language acquisition occurs in a variety of different contexts (Bahrani et al., 2014; Bataller, 2010; Cadd, 2012; Dixon et al., 2012; Lindseth, 2010; Diao et al., 2011). Dixon et al. (2012) suggested the importance of “making sure the social and cultural context is taken into account” (p. 49). These cultural and social interactions are foundational to second language

acquisition and study abroad programs (Bataller, 2010; Bahrani et al., 2014; Cadd, 2012; Diao et al., 2011; Dixon et al., 2012; Lindseth, 2010).

Dixon et al. (2012) suggested that no longer could second language acquisition educators have viewpoints such as “foreign language in context, the canard that ‘younger is better’ should be rejected; in fact, the research is quite robust that, holding hours of instruction constant, older learners perform better” (p. 46). Researchers need to examine second language acquisition beliefs for further understanding of how one acquires language (Dixon et al., 2012). Perspectives and considerations for research in various scenarios and contexts of SLA need to occur (Wang, 2010).

Dixon et al. (2012) suggested that SLA can only be comprehended through the lens of examining the social and cultural interactions learners have with native speakers during natural cultural contexts. This is more likely to occur in a non-native immersed setting where the learner will encounter the culture and the language being acquired (Dixon et al., 2012). However, these interactions can occur in the classroom situation but in a less natural manner than in a SA program or living immersed.

Second language acquisition motivation. Dornyei and Csizer (2005) suggested that during second language acquisition “intercultural contact, by and large, promoted positive intergroup and language attitudes” (p. 351). Dixon et al. (2012) discovered in a recent study that motivation is influential in SLA. Motivation and the reasons behind the learners motivation in SLA can generate various explanations such as grade requirements, one’s own personal desires to learn a second language, or part of a job requirement. However, the motivation to engage in the culture is an even more personal difference that varies from person to person. These

characteristics, such as self-confidence, fear, and anxiety all factor into the personal motivation of engaging with native speakers when living immersed (Dornyei, 1994; Ko-Yin, 2013).

Many researchers have been interested in the role motivation plays in second language acquisition (Campbell & Storch, 2011; Dornyei, 1994; Gardner, 2000; Ko-Yin, 2013; Zang, Su, & Lui, 2013). Ko-Yin (2013) investigated learner motivation in foreign language learning. In this research, findings indicated that motivation did not make a difference when controlling for aspects such as gender and starting age with little or no differences (Ko-Yin, 2013). Zang, Su, and Lui (2013) discovered that motivation did play a role in SLA but at very small percentage. Zang et al. found that intrinsic motivation was also low.

Gardner's (2000) research found that the learning situation is directly associated with learner motivation. Motivation is more than how hard a learner works to learn a language (Gardner, 2000). The main component in motivation for second language acquisition is the desire to learn the language and learners found the language gains rewarding (Gardner, 2000). Gardner found that the correlation did not equal causation between motivation and second language acquisition. However, Gardner's belief is that "integrative motivation does promote second language acquisition" (p. 21).

The role of motivation can change over time during second language acquisition (Campbell & Storch, 2011). Language learners can begin highly motivated and depending on positive and negative experiences that they may encounter can lead to demotivation (Campbell & Storch, 2011). Some of these factors can include negative experiences with proficient speakers, frustration in learning, and perceptions about future job opportunities (Campbell & Storch, 2011). In their recent study, Campbell and Storch (2011) discovered that overall these factors

did not change the focus of the second language learner; only that they learned to distance themselves from the contributing factor of demotivation.

Length of time in second language acquisition study. Length of language contact time is an area of concern in second language acquisition study (Dewey et al., 2012; Lindseth, 2010; Wang, 2010). One study regarding SLA and oral proficiency skills determined that “language skills do not appear overnight; they emerge gradually” (Lindseth, 2010, p. 255). This is a common misconception for many educators and learner of SLA. Learners encounter questions of length of time in the traditional SLA classroom as well as those enrolled in study abroad programs (Dewey et al., 2012). Many factors need to be considered in second language acquisition and according to Dewey et al. (2012) “the overall picture regarding language use may be a complex one, with variables such as time in country, pre-departure proficiency, motivation, and personality being possible contributing factors” (p. 112).

The fact that language skills do not come quickly poses the question of when and how learners begin to acquire a second language (Dewey et al., 2012; Lindseth, 2010). Lindseth (2010) investigated oral proficiency gains in second language during a semester. In this study, findings indicated that gains occurred but not significant (Lindseth, 2010). This study leads to an interesting consideration of time in context of study abroad (Lindseth, 2010).

Study Abroad

Study abroad is a program that participants utilize to study in another location other than one’s own native country. Kinginger (2013) stated, “among language educators, students, policy makers, and the public, study abroad has been routinely interpreted as a context for language learning” (p. 341). SA programs can enhance second language acquisition as well as cultural

understanding (Dewey et al., 2012; Kinginger, 2013; Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005). This is a common practice for many second language learners and often a requirement in SLA.

Second language acquisition outcomes during study abroad have related that second language acquisition outcomes have very individual differences (Kinging, 2013). Some participants in SA programs will excel while others will stumble (Dewey et al., 2012; Kinginger, 2013). The experiences learners have in SA programs are also widely varied (Kinging, 2013). Martinsen, Baker, Dewey, Bown, and Johnson (2010) attributed these differences to “structure, emphasis, and length” (p. 45). The SA program itself is what influences individual differences in second language acquisition for learners (Martinsen et al., 2010).

These differences can be tied to the quality of the study abroad program, student identity, and the willingness to engage in the culture and context around them (Kinging, 2013). Bataller (2010) conducted a study in which the evaluation of second language acquisition occurred in terms of pragmatic development during study abroad. Pragmatic development is the language development and proficiency in terms of practical abilities such as asking directions and ordering at a restaurant and a pragmatic request is the ability to ask for something such as a service or item during such practical scenarios (Bataller, 2010). Bataller found that participants only had a slight change in pragmatic requests after four months of immersion.

Second language acquisition in study abroad is an area of research and inquiry with many complexities involved (Kinging, 2011). There are many factors to consider other than just language proficiency obtained during SA, but cultural awareness and identity, linguistic gains, and factors that contribute to second language acquisition during study abroad programs (Baro & Serrano, 2011; Bataller, 2010; Diao et al., 2011; Du, 2013; Kinginger, 2011; Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005; Pellegrino, 1998; Stewart, 2010; Wang, 2010). These areas are continuing

concerns in understanding second language acquisition as differing approaches exist in study abroad programs (Kinging, 2011).

Length of time in study abroad for second language acquisition. Length of time in study abroad programs and successful second language acquisition abroad are both areas considered carefully in research (Baro & Serrano, 2011; Bataller, 2010; Diao et al., 2011; Du, 2013; Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005; Pellegrino, 1998; Stewart, 2010; Wang, 2010). Many assumptions about how long a learner experiences immersion in non-native cultural in reference to language gains exist in the literature (Bataller, 2010). Bataller (2010) related that the “common belief suggests that a learner’s foreign language improves significantly by studying in the country where that language is spoken” (p. 160). This belief regarding study abroad being the quickest route to second language acquisition is held by many (Baro & Serrano, 2011; Bataller, 2010; Di Silvo, Donovan, & Malone, 2014).

The length of time that learners participate in study abroad programs in relation to language and cultural gains exists in the literature in recent years (Diao et al., 2011; Di Silvo et al., 2014; Kinginger, 2011; Wang, 2010). Diao et al. (2011) conducted research regarding French SA programs and common beliefs and related that thoughts surrounding study abroad experiences in second language acquisition allow “us to think beyond the once deceptively simple belief that going abroad guarantees enhanced language learning” (p. 129). Research in second language acquisition for study abroad programs in terms of length of time abroad is important to consider (Bataller, 2010). Remembering, “the assumption that spending time in the target country is one of the primary means for learners to acquire pragmatic ability makes research in this area an important endeavor” (Bataller, 2010, p. 160).

Language fluency during study abroad is another aspect examined in understanding second language acquisition (Dewey et al., 2012; Du, 2013; Kinginger, 2011; Lindseth, 2010; Wang, 2010). Study abroad is analyzed for language gains and benefits in many recent studies (Dewey et al., 2012; Diao et al; 2011; Du, 2013; Goldini, 2013; Kinginger, 2011; Stewart, 2010; Wang, 2010; Willis Allen, 2010). Differences such as individual learner motivation and personality affect the development of fluency in second language acquisition during a study abroad program (Du, 2013; Willis Allen, 2010). However, Lindseth (2010) discovered that students have the greatest language gains in fluency in SA programs after three years of formal classroom language instruction. Du (2013) related that “students who spend more time on task using the target language tend to make more progress in fluency than those who do not” (p. 132). Findings indicate other areas such as learner differences such as motivation, engagement, and being open to communicate (Du, 2013).

Engagement in study abroad. As for the time in study abroad programs alone, Du (2013) suggested that it is more than just the time abroad that is an important factor but how the utilization of time abroad occurs. The interactions with local people that are of the most benefit for learners and SA program administrators should create more of those opportunities. In one recent study, Cadd (2012) addressed the issues of students engaging with native speakers while enrolled in SA program. Cadd administered a post-study abroad survey that found over half of the participants felt that the SA experience made them less anxious and more willing to speak with native speakers, as well as have a better understanding of the target culture.

Martinsen et al. (2010) suggested that engagement with native speakers during study abroad programs is an area experts have differing opinions. Many foreign language experts’ view cultural and language engagement during SA programs to have an improving benefit to

second language learners while others doubt the significance (Cadd, 2012; Martinsen et al., 2010). Regardless of viewpoint, both sides agree that this area needs exploration further to gain a better understanding of factors that influence second language acquisition (Cadd, 2012; Martinsen et al., 2010).

Engagement with native speakers in the study abroad experience requires effort (Cadd, 2012; Kinginger, 2011). Purposeful and meaningful encounters with native speakers need to be created and considered by students, study abroad program developers, those families who host second language learners, and those teaching learners in SLA (Cadd, 2012; Kinginger, 2011). These encounters are often a hindrance or a strength according to student perceptions (Cadd, 2012; Gesinski et al., 2010; Goldini, 2013; Pellegrino, 1998). Study abroad participants should have the tools prior to departure in order to best maximize the time in context with the language and culture of study (Kinger, 2011).

Promoting engagement during study abroad programs can occur by establishing opportunities for internships and service learning (Kinger, 2011). Internships afford the opportunity for informal conversations with native speakers (Kinger, 2011). Service learning provides a natural engagement by requiring learners to serve in the community and interact with the native culture and language (Kinger, 2011). Both of these scenarios provide various communicative opportunities for engagement.

Student perception of study abroad. Learners enrolled in study abroad programs have their own perceptions regarding their study abroad experiences and engagement (Cadd, 2012; Gesinski et al., 2010; Goldini, 2013; Pellegrino, 1998). Many learners perceive their SA experience to aid in cultural understanding and strides in language proficiency (Cadd, 2012). According to a recent study, Gesinski et al. (2010) discovered that “spending the entire program

in one locale can allow students to interact more authentically with host country residents” (p. 35). These interactions and opportunities for engagement give learners the real life scenario to interact with native speakers (Pellegrino, 1998).

Many believe these speaking opportunities will vary based upon the social situation (Pellegrino, 1998). According to Pellegrino (1998) the “learner’s perceptions condition their L2 use and choice of learning opportunities” (p. 97). Additionally, Goldini (2013) conveyed that the perspective of Vygotsky (1978) explains much in the language and cultural learning experiences of the students stating that “who we choose to interact with will determine what, and how, we learn” (p. 370).

Cultural awareness and adaptability in study abroad. Participants in study abroad programs encounter a differing culture and language from their own (Williams, 2005). Despite the levels of engagement with native speakers, cultural encounters will take place (Kinginger, 2011). Participants need to have a characteristic of cultural adaptability in order to maximize their experiences abroad (Williams, 2005). Some traits of cultural adaptability include being flexible, open-minded, being non-judgmental, one’s ability to deal with stress, stability, and possessing cultural empathy (Williams, 2005).

College students who participate in study abroad programs demonstrate a greater level of cultural awareness (Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005; Williams, 2005). Williams (2005) researched students’ intercultural communication skills and adaptability and found that “the experience of being abroad in and of itself is not enough-students must interact with the culture to receive the gain of increased intercultural communication skills” (p. 369-370). Williams (2005) urged that the interaction with the host culture be purposeful and that program leaders facilitate these encounters so that cultural awareness occurs.

Study abroad can lead to an effective means of cultural awareness and adaptability (Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005; Mapp, 2012). Study abroad brings an “experience in another nation, such as that gained through a study abroad experience, has received growing attention as a method to help students develop their intercultural knowledge and adaptability (Mapp, 2012, p. 727). In an age where globalization is changing the face of business, education, and communication; cultural awareness and adaptability is an area of interest for many (Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005; Williams, 2005; Mapp, 2012).

Long-term study abroad opportunities provide learners with the opportunities to engage culturally (Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005; Mapp, 2012). During an evaluation of learners in a semester long SA program findings indicated, “that it enhanced the ability of students to recognize that people from other cultures shared both similarities as well as differences with them” (Mapp, 2012, p. 727). This cross-cultural and language exposure is important and the benefit gained by learners is important to consider when researching the full spectrum of second language acquisition (Lewis & Niesenbaum, 2005).

Student assistance in study abroad. Offering assistance such as advice and strategies prior to departure in a study abroad program can be of great benefit (Cadd, 2012; Di Silvo et al., 2014; Du, 2013; Goldini, 2013; Kinginger, 2011; Stewart, 2010). Study abroad programs that emphasize language learning should be a priority for those participants seeking second language acquisition skills (Kinging, 2011). Stewart (2010) suggested that prior to departure, learners acquire language-learning strategies to help better ready them for the challenges of SLA abroad. Stewart also suggested that exercises done prior to departure are beneficial that “could help them discover what attitudes they hold that may conflict with the target culture and how best to manage similar situations when studying abroad” (p. 154).

Kinginger (2011) advised that preparing learners for the study abroad experience promote engagement while abroad. Learners need to be encouraged to interact with native speakers during their SA experience to enhance language and cultural gains (Cadd, 2012; Di Silvo et al., 2014). Di Silvo et al. (2014) suggested that learners need to remember, “extensive interactions with native speakers does not happen automatically during study abroad” (p.180). A consideration of a strong personal commitment to engage in the culture and interact with native speakers, specifically the host family is important to remember in study abroad to make the greatest gains in proficiency skills (Di Silvo et al., 2014).

There are ways in which learners can be prepared to maximize engagement in the language and culture (Kinginger, 2011). Language preparation prior to departure in order to practice the language often gives confidence and a more willingness to engage in the language (Kinginger, 2011). Learners also need to be given an understanding of how second language acquisition occurs and an ability to “observe and reflect upon their experiences in an unbiased manner” (Kinginger, 2011, p. 67).

Learners in second language acquisition should receive guidance before participating in study abroad programs (Cadd, 2012; Di Silvo et al., 2014; Du, 2013; Goldini, 2013; Kinginger, 2011; Stewart, 2010). This guidance will assist learners in setting realistic goals, identifying bias, and how to work on observing the host culture and language via an unbiased lens (Kinginger, 2011). Consideration to learners during study abroad programs for service learning and other avenues to engage actively in their environments needs to occur (Kinginger, 2011).

Service Learning

Service learning during a study abroad program or specifically alone is similar to a study abroad experience with the addition of learning through acts of community service in the target

culture and country (Feenstra, 2011; Hummel, 2013; Martinsen et al., 2010; Medina & Gordon, 2014; Miller-Perrin & Thompson, 2010). The philosophy of weaving education and community service is a defining trait of SL (Carney, 2013; Feenstra, 2011; Hummel, 2013; Medina & Gordon, 2014; Miller-Perrin & Thompson, 2010; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004). The addition of purposefully interacting with the community “involves openness to, and respect for, the target community, and on an even more extreme scale, complete identification with these cultural groups” (Medina & Gordon, 2014, p. 361). Miller-Perrin and Thompson (2010) discussed the elements of SL as a development of faith and spirituality for learners, as well as identity development and sense of vocational calling.

The purposeful connection of community service and language learning creates natural places for social and cultural interactions (Medina & Gordon, 2014). Carney (2013) related, “combining service-learning with second language acquisition makes overall learning more effective” (p. 235). This connection is both practical and transformational (Carney, 2013; Hummel, 2013). Goldini (2013) found in a recent study concerning student immersion experiences that students “sensed that, while serving others, their work for the community also provided an effective way of enhancing their study abroad experience and supporting their academic and personal success using Spanish for real purposes” (p. 369).

Cultural learning and engagement exists in participants of service learning programs (Barreneche, 2011; Carney, 2013; Martinsen et al., 2010). Those who enroll in SL programs have more confidence and are more likely to interact with native speakers (Martinsen et al., 2010). Participants showed gains in cultural understanding and motivation levels changed positively in SL programs (Martinsen et al., 2010). However, Martinsen et al. (2010) urged the importance of future research in target language gains.

Service learning is a growing program and portion of learning abroad (Bataller, 2010; Barreneche, 2011). In recent years, service learning has grown in instructional use and as a way for institutions of higher education to connect the community and culture with the students (Barreneche, 2011). SL programs allow participants the opportunities to engage in the culture and the language of study (Barreneche, 2011). Through these opportunities, participants are able to “reflect on and understand cultural differences” (Barreneche, 2011, p. 106).

Serving in the community during study abroad is a way to enhance second language acquisition that many programs utilize for learner motivation and language confidence (Feenstra, 2011; Hummel, 2013; Medina & Gordon, 2014). Medina and Gordon (2014) discovered in a recent study that when learners worked in social community service settings when evaluated a “statistically significant increase in learners’ motivation and attitudes” (p. 358). Many benefits of service learning such as increased community involvement, cultural and language interactions, and personal gains exist (Carney, 2013; Hummel, 2013; Medina & Gordon, 2014; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004).

Personal satisfaction weaves into the study abroad experience when service learning is a key component for participants (Carney, 2013; Hummel, 2013; Medina & Gordon, 2014; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004). Participants serve in the community and engage with the language and culture around them (Carney, 2013; Hummel, 2013; Medina & Gordon, 2014; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004). During this time, confidence grows as the concerns of failure and embarrassment ease for participants (Carney, 2013; Hummel, 2013; Medina & Gordon, 2014; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004). The language proficiency gains in the second language as well as the personal satisfaction of serving and interacting with the community are common outcomes of

service learning programs (Carney, 2013; Hummel, 2013; Medina & Gordon, 2014; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004).

Participation in a service-learning program can also have positive effects for Christians in understanding God's calling in their lives (Feenstra, 2011; Miller-Perrin & Thompson, 2010). Miller-Perrin and Thompson (2010) suggested the importance of faith and integration for learners when abroad. The circumstances of living in cultural and language immersion push learners to rely on their faith as a coping mechanism of the challenges that occur (Miller-Perrin & Thompson, 2010). This coping mechanism may serve as an integral part for learners who are living abroad immersed to either fulfill or discover a vocational calling (Miller-Perrin & Thompson, 2010).

Christian Calling

The Christian calling to a vocational area is of interest to many (Galles & Lenz, 2013; Hernandez, Foley, & Beitin, 2011; Price, 2013). Galles and Lenz (2013) defined the construct of calling as the "extent to which individuals feel summoned or called to enter a particular career or life role" (p. 241). Often, the term 'calling' has a spiritual connotation. For Christians, in particular, this calling reflects an opportunity to perform a certain task in an answer to God's will for their life (Galles & Lenz, 2013; Price, 2013). Price (2013) described calling as answering God's call to follow Him as a believing Christian. However, the term calling has become widespread to transcend the religious and spiritual realm (Galles & Lenz, 2013). This study will consider the term 'calling' only as it relates to the Christian's response. It is the purpose of this inquiry and research that calling be referred to in specific terms of the Christian calling.

Individuals who have a sense of calling to a certain vocation are more motivated to fulfill that calling (Duffy & Dik, 2013; Galles & Lenz, 2013; Hernandez et al., 2011). Many Christians

share the viewpoint that it is their responsibility to find their calling vocationally (Price, 2013). It is common for Christians to be intrinsically motivated to fulfill their calling and to feel a greater meaning in their lives while doing so (Hernandez et al., 2011). Duffy and Dik (2013) found that people who are fulfilling their calling have a greater sense of satisfaction in life. For Christian missionaries, communicating with people is imperative to their call of serving Christ and teaching God's Word in their country of service. For those Christian missionaries living in non-native immersed settings, this means being able to communicate in a foreign language. The need for second language acquisition in fulfilling their calling is connected to their satisfaction on the mission field (Oh & Meiring, 2009). Christian missionaries who are answering their Christian call to serve but who need to learn a foreign language should have their experiences described to add to the body of literature and provide more information for second language acquisition understanding.

Some experience an answer to vocational calling during SL programs in which they are interacting with the community (Feenstra, 2011). This experience in SL programs often can bring about a situation that participants refer to as deep gladness (Feenstra, 2011). This deep gladness can assist many in discovering their calling, in particular, their vocational calling (Feenstra, 2011). Feenstra (2011) suggested that first individuals needed to understand themselves before they are able to discover their vocational calling. Feenstra related, "for Christians, service allows us not just to learn about ourselves as individuals but also to be reminded of our place within the community and our identity as Christ-followers" (p. 67). Feenstra encouraged the reminder that all Christians are called to serve.

The Christian call to ministry is an area that is of interest for those involved in mission organizations abroad and in an individual's homeland (Cousineau et al., 2010; Price, 2013). In a

recent study about missionary predictors to success, Cousineau et al. (2010) explained, “the sense of being ‘called’ to missionary work contributed to all areas of satisfaction, including ministry satisfaction” (p. 356). This sense of calling is an important aspect for those entering the ministry and mission professions (Cousineau et al., 2010; Price, 2013). In fact, it is a consideration necessary for effective ministry in cross-cultural settings (Plake, 2014).

In a recent study, Hernandez et al. (2011) found that participants relied on their calling from God to guide their career choices. Hernandez et al. (2011) related that the participants acknowledged that despite a calling to a specific vocation that the “calling was not one directional in that God provided participants with everything they needed to begin their calling” (p. 71). Many Christian missionaries who need to learn a foreign language to fulfill their call to serve are experiencing this area.

There is little research concerning the Christian calling. However, it is an area that needs to be explored further (Hernandez et al., 2011). While there is little peer-reviewed research on the Christian calling in literature, there are dissertations whose aim was to understand the phenomenon of the Christian calling to a vocation (Phillips, 2009; Schrage, 2011). Phillips (2009) researched what influences the college student’s sense of calling has for selecting careers. Phillips found that there were several influences such as campus and student involvement on campus, which assisted in the influence for Christian college students. The Christian calling in relation to vocation is not widespread in the literature but does exist (Price, 2013). However, the need to learn a foreign language for Christian missionaries to fulfill their calling is one aspect that will be explored further in this study.

Understanding the call to mission is often a difficult one for Christians (Sills, 2008). According to Sills (2008) “some Christians genuinely wrestle with the missionary call” (p. 22).

Many Christians describe the call as a burden for all nations that God has placed in their hearts and souls and this burden will not go away (Sills, 2008). Some believers can confuse this burden; one distinguishing factor between the need for missions in the world and God's calling needs to be present (Sills, 2008). Christians "should not go driven by the need alone, but God often uses the need as a starting place to awaken His call" (Sills, 2008, p. 23). Sills defined Christians who receive the call to be missionaries as being aware of the needs globally as well as the awareness and desire to fulfill the Great Commission. These Christian missionaries receive the call from God (Matthew 28, NIV).

The Great Commission is a beginning point of reference to many Christians considering the call to missions (Matthew 28, NIV; Sills, 2008). However, with this mandate, all Christians receive the call to serve in international mission work (Sills, 2008). It is the difference that according to Sills (2008), "God calls some to be senders" (p. 58). This understanding is a crucial point in discerning the Christian call to missions. If every Christian were to go out into the nations, there would be no one left at home to raise support, pray, and to serve in ministry opportunities among believers (Sills, 2008). Not every Christian has received the call to enter into mission work abroad, but all have received the call of The Great Commission (Matthew 28, NIV; Sills, 2008).

Summary

Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory are two important theories that guide this research. Understanding how learners obtain knowledge from their social and cultural interactions, modeling observed behavior, and determining intentions for these interactions all play an important part in this study. Learning from the

surroundings of the culture in which learners are interacting utilizing the zone of proximal development is key component in socio-cultural theory (Vygotsky, 1978).

These cultural and social interactions are necessary for Christian missionaries living in non-native homelands. The history of Christian missions is vast and long, beginning in biblical times with The Great Commission (Matthew 28, NIV). Many challenges exist for missionaries including cultural adaptability (Cousineau et al., 2010). All of these aspects, of course, begin with the call to missions for Christians. The need to learn a foreign language for those Christian missionaries in order to fulfill their calling in non-native homelands involves second language acquisition.

Second language learners have a vast number of opportunities for learning both in the classroom and with study abroad programs (Bahrani et al., 2014; Bataller, 2010; Cadd, 2012; Dixon et al., 2012; Lindseth, 2010; Diao et al., 2011). This occurs by study abroad programs as well as participation in service learning projects (Feenstra, 2011; Hummel, 2013; Medina & Gordon, 2014; Miller-Perrin & Thompson, 2010). Christian missionaries who are involved in foreign missions encounter experiences that place them abroad in a non-native culture and second or third language (Cousineau et al., 2010; Oh & Meiring, 2009). These Christians are involved in missions because they have answered a call to do so (Cousineau et al., 2010).

Second language acquisition occurs when learners are surrounded culturally and communicatively according to Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory of learning (Behroozizad et al., 2014; Cortazzi & Hall, 1998; Dixon et al., 2012; Turuk, 2008; Schinke-Llano, 1993; Van Compernelle & Williams, 2013; Wang, 2010). Christian missionaries need to learn a foreign language to fulfill their calling to serve and this interaction socially and culturally with the native language and culture create that environment (Oh & Meiring, 2009). It is the purpose of this

research to investigate this need and the shared lived experiences of Christian missionaries who are fulfilling their calling.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

Overview

The purpose of this qualitative study was to describe the lived experiences of Christian missionaries who need to learn a foreign language to fulfill their calling to serve in sharing the Gospel with others. I described the lived experiences of a purposeful sample of Christian missionaries who are living globally in immersed settings by employing Moustakas' (1994) transcendental phenomenological design. This chapter outlines data collection procedures, analysis, and routes to trustworthiness as well as my role as the researcher. Methods for ensuring trustworthiness such as credibility by triangulation, member checks, and peer debriefing will occur in the trustworthiness section of this chapter (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Lastly, I address ethical considerations such as confidentiality of participants and security of data (Creswell, 2013).

Design

This study utilized a qualitative transcendental phenomenological approach. Qualitative research was the desired approach because the phenomenon of the lived experiences of Christian missionaries needing to learn a foreign language to fulfill their call to serve needed to be explored further. Phenomenon descriptions cannot be quantitatively measured or “approachable quantitative approaches” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 21). Qualitative research allows for listening and describing the lived experiences, stories, and in the final form contains “the voices of participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, complex description, and interpretation of the problem, and its contribution to the literature” (Creswell, 2013, p. 44). It is important to give the Christian missionaries the opportunity to share in their own voice their stories and experiences as they described the need to learn a foreign language to fulfill their Christian calling.

Phenomenology is a design that “attempts to eliminate everything that represents a prejudgment” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 41). Husserl (1973) stated that phenomenology is the “general doctrine of essences” (p. 3). The method of researching the essence of an experience is at the core of phenomenology (Husserl, 1973). Moustakas (1994) conveyed that Husserl’s idea of phenomenology is “a new way of looking at things, a return to things as they actually appear” (p. 45). This study described the essence of the lived experiences of Christian missionaries who need to learn a foreign language to fulfill their Christian calling to serve in non-native immersed settings.

Transcendental phenomenology serves to describe the phenomenon rather than interpret the phenomenon as in hermeneutical phenomenology (Creswell, 2013). Moustakas (1994) defined transcendental phenomenology as “a scientific study of the appearance of thing, of phenomena just as we see them and as they appear to us in consciousness” (p. 49). In transcendental phenomenology, the researcher is describing the phenomenon to arrive “at an understanding of the essences of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 49). An important aspect in transcendental phenomenology is a process called *epoche*, which involves “bracketing” the researcher’s own bias (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) defined *epoche* as “meaning to refrain from judgment, to abstain from or stay away from the everyday, ordinary way of perceiving things” (p. 33). Moustakas (1994) related that “everyday understandings, judgments, and knowings are set aside, and the phenomena are revisited, freshly, naively, in a wide open sense, from the vantage point of a pure or transcendental ego” (p. 33). When the *epoche* process occurs, it allows a true description of the phenomena to occur (Moustakas, 1994). I kept a reflective journal during the *epoche* process and excerpts of this journal can be viewed in Appendix D. This design was important to this research because the goal was to describe and

bring understanding to the lived experiences of Christian missionaries living non-native immersed who need to learn a foreign language in order to fulfill their calling.

Research Questions

The central question guiding this research was:

What are the experiences of Christians living in an immersed setting in a foreign country who need to learn a foreign language in order to fulfill a Christian calling?

The following research sub-questions support the central question:

1. What role does calling play for Christian missionaries in learning a foreign language in an immersed setting?
2. What challenges do Christian missionaries experience in immersed settings experience in the need to learn a foreign language?
3. What coping strategies do Christians employ in the need to learn a foreign language?

Setting

The setting for this study was the global immersed mission field for Christian missionaries. The specific countries were dependent on those participants agreeing to engage in this research endeavor. This setting selection was because of the vast array of languages and cultures that exist in the world. Christians are living globally to fulfill callings and the global stage is appropriate in order to have participants living in true immersed settings. The focus of this study was not on specific languages learned, cultures, or countries, but on the common shared lived experiences for the Christian missionaries as they learn a foreign language to fulfill the call to serve.

Participants

The participants in this study were from a purposeful sample of adult Christians of 18

years of age or older who need to learn a foreign language in an immersed setting in order to fulfill their calling as missionaries. This decision was to ensure that “all participants have experience of the phenomenon being studied” (Creswell, 2013, p. 155). The sampling procedure began with convenience sampling through a vast array of international and mission organizations. I contacted the missionary acquaintances via email to inquire about interest in participating. After identification of several Christian missionaries occurred, I utilized snowball sampling based upon other Christian missionaries that initial participants know who were able and willing to participate based upon the research criteria.

Creswell (2013) stated that it is important to establish maximum variation. I ensured maximum variation by selecting a minimum of ten participants from all walks of life who varied in age, gender, and ethnicity. The participants were in non-native immersed settings employed as a Christian missionary by a variety of mission associations and organizations across the globe, and living abroad from their native country and language for a minimum time one month and a maximum time to two years. All potential participants received a recruitment letter (Appendix B) and provided their informed consent (Appendix C) before research began.

Procedures

No data collection occurred until approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and completion of a pilot study. Participants were selected by purposive and convenience sampling through the various personal acquaintances with missionary contacts. Informed consent (see Appendix C) occurred in written form from participants prior to data collection (Creswell, 2013). Data collection occurred via open-ended questionnaires, online discussion forum questions, and personal semi-structured interviews. The data analysis followed a method by Moustakas (1994) for phenomenological research as explained in further detail in this chapter.

Expert Review of Data Collection Instruments

Expert reviews of data collection instruments are “one method that many investigators will use to evaluate an instrument” (Davis, 1992, p. 194). An expert review was completed by asking two professionals in the field of second language acquisition who hold Doctor of Philosophy degrees in linguistics and have either served or lived abroad as a missionary in a non-native foreign language setting to review all of the data collection questions to ensure validity and reliability. This expert review of the questions to be used in data collection for this study checked for question coherency, word usage, and offered any applicable suggestions for improvement. Feedback included suggestions for future research once this study is concluded utilizing a mixed methods approach in research. The expert review also verified the quantity of data collection questions and offered that no other questions should be added.

Pilot Study

A pilot study of the data collection instruments occurred to ensure further the reliability. All three types of data collection were utilized in the pilot study after IRB approval granting occurred with several missionaries who are now working on the field as missionaries. Creswell (2013) stated that the research can “refine the interview questions and the procedures further through pilot testing” (p. 165). I asked each member of the pilot study to complete the open-ended questionnaire, participate in the discussion board forum questions, and I conducted the semi-structured interviews. The results of the piloting process were useful for the purposes of this study in assisting to refine questions, data collection procedures such as interviewing, and adjust instruments as needed. The pilot study was an important aspect of this study to validate the data collection instruments and procedures.

The Researcher's Role

Creswell (2013) referred to the qualitative researcher as a “key instrument” (p. 45). Data analysis required on my part “complex reasoning through inductive and deductive logic” (Creswell, 2013, p. 45). I was the human instrument in that all questions were self-created and expert reviewed as well as all data collection and all analysis occurred by me in this study.

My credentials in being able to serve as the human instrument in this study include a Bachelors and Masters in Spanish/Education. I have taught Spanish for over 15 years at all levels of learning and at varied levels of Spanish instruction from beginning Spanish to upper division Spanish and SLA methods courses at the university level. I have studied abroad and lived immersed in a non-native culture and language in Madrid, Spain. In being the human instrument, I was the one conducting the interviews, analyzing the data, and relating the common essence of the described phenomenon in which the participants are living and experiencing. For this reason, I utilized the process of *epoche* and bracketed my own experiences in this study by setting aside my own personal understanding by journaling (Appendix D), experiences, and any judgments that I have in order to see the material in a fresh and new way (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). I did not have any personal relationship with any of the participants nor know them prior to the research. I had no affiliation with any of the mission organizations in which the missionaries will be working. I obtained the participants via the numerous faculty and mission organizations based in the United States with mission and global impact. My role was to describe and relate the lived experiences of the participants (Creswell, 2013).

Data Collection

Data collection occurred by the following three collection techniques: open-ended questionnaire (see Appendix E), online discussion forum questions (see Appendix F), and semi-

structured interviews (see Appendix G). These three types of data collection assisted in revealing the essence of the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994). Detailed discussion of each type of data collection will occur in this section.

Open-ended Questionnaire

The first instrument given to all participants was an open-ended questionnaire (Appendix E) that was self-created and reviewed in collaboration with experts with a Doctor of Philosophy in second language acquisition. An open-ended questionnaire is a different type of interview process to collect data conducted in written format to obtain information and descriptions of the phenomenon to be described (Creswell, 2013). An expert review of this instrument occurred and it was considered to be a valid instrument in seeking the intended information. The open-ended questionnaire assisted in gathering data about the phenomenon as well as provided basic background information of the participant. The questionnaire focused on missionaries' experiences living immersed while trying to fulfill their Christian calling. Participants completed this electronically within one week of receiving it. The purpose of this questionnaire was to obtain basic information about the participant as well as collect data about the participant experiences of having living immersed in a non-native culture and language who need to learn the language to fulfill their calling and service. Additionally, participants wrote about their experiences in the need to fulfill their Christian calling to serve. The information assisted in identifying the textural and structural descriptions and themes within the phenomenon studied and for purposes in providing credibility of the research (Creswell, 2013).

The open-ended questionnaire consisted of the following:

1. Name _____
2. Age _____

3. Gender _____
4. Ethnicity _____
5. Years of Missionary service _____
6. Years of Missionary service abroad _____
7. Current country serving in mission _____
8. Number of previous missions abroad _____
9. Please describe your daily experiences in learning a foreign language while living abroad immersed.
10. Please describe your calling into the ministry abroad.
11. Please describe your experiences in needing to learn this foreign language to fulfill your calling.
12. Please describe how you have coped in your learning a foreign language to fulfill your calling.
13. Please describe your challenges in living abroad culturally.
14. Please describe your challenges in living abroad learning a foreign language.
15. Please describe your challenges in fulfilling your call to serve.

Learners living in an immersed setting learning a foreign language will experience interactions in their learning environment and non-native cultures in order for obtain the language skills for proficiency (Dixon et al., 2012; Willis Allen, 2010). Questions one through eight provided background information on the participant as well as ensured that the participants meet the criteria for participants in this study. Questions nine and 11 through 15 sought to provide information and descriptions on the experiences and challenges that Christian missionaries had while learning a foreign language in a non-native immersed setting (Willis

Allen, 2010). These questions supported the central and sub-questions guiding this research. Further, these questions sought to describe the social and cultural interactions Christian missionaries have in the non-native immersed setting while learning a foreign language from the guiding theories of Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory.

Christian calling is an important aspect for many Christians in their life journey (Price, 2013; Sills, 2008). Questions 10 and 11 sought to describe the experience of calling for Christians to the mission field. There is little research describing or related to the Christian calling and a need exists to explore this further (Hernandez et al., 2011). Questions 10 and 11 sought to provide and add to the literature rich descriptive data regarding the experience of Christian calling to missions (Hernandez et al., 2011; Sills, 2008). These questions supported the central research questions as well as the first sub-question of this research.

Finally, Christian missionaries face cultural and language immersion issues when living abroad to fulfill their calling (Cousineau et al., 2010; Hoke & Taylor, 2009; Stewart, 2010; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004). Questions 12 through 15 sought to describe the experiences, challenges, and coping strategies Christian missionaries encounter when interacting in the culture socially and linguistically. These questions supported the central research question as well as sub-question two and three guiding this research. These social and cultural interactions in second language acquisition are rooted in Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory guiding this research.

Online Discussion Forum

Participants in the study shared in an online asynchronous discussion forum (see Appendix F) and discussed their lived experiences immersed in foreign culture and the need to

learn a foreign language to fulfill their Christian calling. An online discussion forum platform was chosen due to the nature that participants were not living in the same time zone, country, needed to plan for internet access, and had different work schedules. Online data collection can “provide participants with the time and space flexibility that allows them more time to consider and respond to request for information” (Creswell, 2013, p. 159). The technology utilized for this study was EdModo, a data collection resource that ensured confidentiality. An online discussion forum provided data regarding to the lived experiences and strengthened the research by adding to the existing data collected from the open-ended questionnaires to identify the common themes (Creswell, 2013). Participants posted an initial response to the question of the week and responded to at least two of the other participant’s post. Two responses were the minimum requested, however they were encouraged to respond and participate as much as needed.

The online discussion forum questions were as follows:

1. Please post an introductory post to introduce yourself to the online forum group. Please describe your calling to missions and your call to your specific area abroad. Please provide any additional information you would find important regarding your placement and answering God’s calling.
2. What experiences are you encountering or have you encountered in your need to learn a foreign language in order to fulfill a Christian calling?
3. What role does your calling have in your foreign language learning?
4. What challenges have you experienced in the need to learn a foreign language?
5. What coping strategies do you experience in the need to learn a foreign language?

Christian calling to ministry and mission work is an identifying factor for many Christian workers in missions and ministry field (Price, 2013; Sills, 2008). Questions one through three sought to understand the role calling has for Christians serving as missionaries and need to learn a foreign language (Hernandez et al., 2011; Sills, 2008). Additionally, these questions sought to describe the experiences of Christian missionaries in answering the call to mission work and where they are called (Hernandez et al., 2013; Sills, 2008). Christian missionaries answering the call to missions living in a non-native country need to learn a foreign language (Action International Ministries, 2015; Culbertson, 2015). These questions supported the central question and the first sub-question guiding this research.

Second language acquisition can be a challenge for many learners (Dixon et al., 2012). Questions four and five sought to describe the challenges Christian missionaries experience as they are learning a foreign language to fulfill their calling (Bataller, 2010; Cousineau et al., 2010; Stewart, 2010). These questions supported the central question and the second and third sub-question of this research. Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory guided these questions as the social and cultural interactions in learning a foreign language as well as coping strategies and challenges will be explored.

Interviews

After participants completed the open-ended questionnaire and answered online discussion forum questions in the online discussion forum the final data collection tool of semi-structured personal interviews (see Appendix G) occurred. The majority of these interviews occurred via Skype due to the nature of the global living situations of the participants. Participants were asked questions regarding to their lived experiences in an immersed setting such as those that inquired about description of possible challenges, rewards and cultural

experiences that they may have encountered in their need to learn a foreign language to fulfill their Christian calling. The personal interviews provided another layer of rich data to arrive at the textural and structural descriptions and the essence of the phenomenon (Creswell, 2013).

The interview questions were as follows:

1. What are your experiences living in an immersed setting in a foreign country?
2. What are your experiences in being called by God to serve?
3. What are your experiences learning a foreign language to fulfill your Christian calling?
4. What role does your calling play in your learning a foreign language culturally?
5. What role does your calling play in your learning a foreign language for communication?
6. What challenges do you experience in the need to learn a foreign language?
7. What coping strategies do you experience in the need to learn a foreign language?
8. What advice would you give to a new missionary in what to expect in their experiences living abroad in learning a foreign language to fulfill their calling?

The purposes of the questions pertaining to Christian calling and the missionaries need to fulfill their call to serve sought to describe the experiences Christians are having (Cousineau et al., 2010). Additionally, these questions sought to describe the lived experiences of the Christian missionary need to learn a foreign language in order to fulfill their Christian calling (Bataller, 2010; Cousineau et al., 2010; Stewart, 2010). These questions supported the central question and number one of the sub-questions in this research. The theoretical framework for these questions included Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory and

Bandura's (1986) social learning theory as pertains to the social and cultural experiences and foreign language learning.

The purpose of the questions regarding the role of the Christian calling was to describe and identify what role this calling had in motivating Christians to learn a foreign language (Mendez Lopez & Pena Aguilar, 2013; Willis Allen, 2010). The question regarding challenges sought to identify what challenges Christian missionaries experience in SLA to fulfill their calling (Stewart, 2010; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004). These questions supported the central question and number two of the sub-questions. Finally, the questions regarding coping strategies and advice sought to identify what Christian missionaries learning a foreign language to fulfill their calling are experiencing in the how they are surviving the experience (Cousineau et al., 2010; Stewart, 2010; Tonkin & Quiroga, 2004). These questions supported the central question and number three of the sub-questions in this research.

Data Analysis

Moustakas' (1994) approach and procedures for analysis of transcendental phenomenological data occurred. I transcribed verbatim all data that was not in written form. In analysis, I first set aside my own personal experiences by practicing *epoche* and bracketing to begin the data analysis process (Moustakas, 1994). Moustakas (1994) referred to the *epoche* process as needing "unusual, sustained attention, concentration, and presence" (p. 88). I then set aside my own biases in written journal form until "ready for an authentic encounter" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 89).

A process of phenomenological reduction began by which all three forms of data were analyzed by the process of horizontalization (Moustakas, 1994). Horizontalization is a process by which "each phenomenon has equal value as we seek to disclose its nature and essence"

(Moustakas, 1994, p. 95). Horizontalization (Appendix G) occurred until the final stage of phenomenological reduction in giving the “textural description of the experience” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 96). This textural description was what Christian missionaries are living and experiencing in their need to learn a foreign language to fulfill their calling.

I utilized imaginative variation to “seek possible meanings through the utilization of imagination, varying the frames of references, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles or functions” (Moustakas, 1994, pp. 97-98). The purpose of the imaginative variation process is to “arrive at structural descriptions of an experience” (Moustakas, 2013, p. 98). This structural description described how Christian missionaries experience the need to learn a foreign language to fulfill their calling. This is an essential phase of the imaginative variation process (Moustakas, 1994). Lastly, this phase of the research analysis included a reflective phase “in which many possibilities are examined and explicated reflectively” (Moustakas, 1994, p. 99).

In summary, after transcription of all oral interviews verbatim, the data analysis procedure began with practicing *epoche* and bracketing of my own personal experiences and biases, the structural themes came from the imaginative variation phase of analysis while the textural themes came from the phenomenological reduction phase (Moustakas, 1994).

Trustworthiness

Establishing trustworthiness sought to increase credibility, transferability, and dependability and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Creswell (2013) related in regards to qualitative research “the detailed thick description and the closeness of the researcher to the participants in the study all add value or accuracy of the study” (p. 250). Credibility,

transferability, dependability, and confirmability are all strategies to establish trustworthiness as outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985).

Credibility

Credibility is an important aspect of trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), credibility is established when “activities that make it more likely that credible findings and interpretations will be produced” (p. 301). Such activities include triangulation and member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I utilized three types of data collection to ensure triangulation of data. After all data had been collected and transcribed, I had member checks to ask the participants to review the transcribed data for accuracy. Lincoln and Guba (1985) described this task as an opportunity “to obtain confirmation that the report has captured the data as constructed” (p. 236). Peer debriefing occurred by a colleague in my department who has a Ph.D. in foreign language. Peer debriefing is important because it “keeps the researcher honest” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). An auditor is “called to authenticate” the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). The external auditor that I used holds a Ph.D. in developmental psychology with an emphasis on early childhood education and research methodology. For this reason and her non-affiliation with the research, I believed her to be an excellent external auditor given her concentration in research methodology. Lastly, reflexivity occurred to ensure that I was conscious of my own biases and values, brought them to the surface, and bracketed them through journaling (Creswell, 2013).

Triangulation makes use of multiple sources and involves “corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective” (Creswell, 2013, p. 251). Utilizing three different types of data collection assisted in triangulating the data to increase trustworthiness of the research (Creswell, 2013). Triangulation occurred to obtain a

representative written description of the essence of the phenomenon researched with all three forms of data collected (Creswell, 2013; Moustakas, 1994). The rich descriptive data provided and maximum variation in sampling increased transferability (Creswell, 2013). Triangulation, peer debriefing, member checks and reflexivity aided in establishing credibility (Creswell, 2013).

Transferability

Providing the research with rich descriptive data allowed “readers to transfer the information to other settings” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). Lincoln and Guba (1985) suggested that the researcher “can provide only the thick descriptions necessary to enable someone interested in making a transfer” (p. 316). Maximum variation occurred by considering different immersed regions of the participants, different age groups, genders and racial groups (Creswell, 2013). According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), this “makes transferability judgements possible on the part of the potential appliers” (p. 316). The rich, thick descriptive data identifying and describing the themes of the lived experiences of the missionaries need to learn a foreign language to fulfill their Christian calling occurred from the data collection instruments and procedures (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Dependability

In dependability, the researcher “seeks means for taking into account both factors of instability and factors of phenomenal or design induced change” (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, p. 299). The ability to replicate the study to achieve the same outcomes increases dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). There is no credibility without dependability (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). The importance of dependability occurred utilizing an audit trail. This audit trail was created from the defense of the proposal and records were kept to outline the steps of this study and are included in Appendix I.

Confirmability

Confirmability ensures that the data is of the participants and not the researcher by employing the use of activities such as journaling (Lincoln & Guba, 1986). The two techniques to assist in confirmability are “triangulation and the keeping of a reflexive journal” (Lincoln & Guba, 1986, pp. 318-319). A reflexive journal ensured that the researcher related an accurate description without any biases (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). An audit trail was utilized to follow the process of data collection and analysis. An audit trail and external auditor examined “whether or not the findings, interpretations, and conclusions are supported by the data” (Creswell, 2013, p. 252). During this process with the external auditor, I kept notes in my journal regarding the feedback that aided in trustworthiness (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are not only important but also necessary in research. No research was conducted until approval was granted from the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of Liberty University (Appendix A). All participants were given informed consent (Appendix C) prior to data collection. Emphasis was given to the voluntary nature of this study and participants were given the right to withdraw at any time should they feel led to do so. Understanding the sensitivity of the mission organization and missionary relationship, confidentiality occurred during this study by giving pseudonyms to all participants, settings, mission organizations and networks affiliated with the participants (Creswell, 2013). I have previously studied abroad in a non-native setting and therefore it was necessary that I practiced *epoche* to address my own personal experiences and biases (Moustakas, 1994). All data was and is secured, password protected, and hard copies locked in cabinets both during data collection and will remain after a three-year required retainment period (Creswell, 2013). All of these measures assisted the

confidentiality of Christian missionaries who participated in the study by sharing personal information.

Summary

This chapter outlined the research design and procedures for describing the lived experiences of Christian missionaries needing to learn a foreign language living in non-native immersed setting in order to fulfill a calling to serve. Data collection procedures for this qualitative transcendental phenomenological study are discussed. Data analysis procedures, participants, the setting, and trustworthiness are given. Finally, ethical considerations pertaining to the research are related.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of this transcendental phenomenological study was to describe the experiences of non-native Christian missionaries and their need to learn a foreign language living in an immersed non-native setting in order to fulfill their Christian calling. During the research, I collected data from 10 participants who met the criterion for participation. The Christian missionaries included four men and six women serving in all parts of the world and participated in semi-structured interviews, completed an open-ended questionnaire, and engaged and answered online discussion forum questions. As the human instrument, using Moustakas' (1994) approach for data analysis in transcendental phenomenology, I collected and analyzed all data.

This chapter includes a brief description of the participants. Pseudonyms are used for participant names and organizations to protect the identities of the participants. A detailed account of identified themes in data analysis is given, presented in the order of the research questions.

Participants

The term participant is being replaced by co-researcher when referring to the Christian missionaries in this study. This decision came because I encouraged them to collaborate with me in this research and the term co-researcher is more applicable due to their involvement on this level (Fraelich, 1989). An introduction to the 10 co-researchers, four males and six females who participated, is included. All of the co-researchers work to fulfill their Christian calling and need a foreign language to do so.

Every encounter with the co-researchers included a clear mission and love of Jesus Christ. The weight of the mission to spread the Gospel to those in other lands was evident with a

bright passion and love for people and Christ. This responsibility was marked by obedience, love, and experiences such as frustration that will be discussed further in this chapter. I believe sharing their stories will bring a greater understanding of what Christian missionaries living abroad experience in their need to learn a foreign language to fulfill their calling.

Elena

Elena is a Christian missionary who served on several short-term mission trips before feeling called to the mission field abroad. She answered God's call with great excitement and has lived immersed for a little over a year. Elena believes that learning a foreign language is difficult but necessary. She related why she feels it is important to learn a foreign language to fulfill her calling. Elena shared, "I believe it is so important to speak to others in their heart language. This is the only way I truly believe that I can be effective in my mission here" (Elena, Individual Interview, September 24, 2016).

Amelia

Amelia has served in several capacities with mission work before in her native language. However, over the last six months, she was called to the mission field in a non-native homeland. She is honored to be doing full-time missions abroad. Amelia described her Christian calling with excitement. Amelia expressed "My call is to Change the World, I do believe that Christ's Church can do it. Right now my calling is to bring a revival to churches to really Change the World as Jesus did" (Amelia, Online Discussion Forum, September, 2016).

Rebecca

Rebecca has led and served on several short-term mission trips before she felt a heavy heart to go work abroad in the Middle East. After answering God's call a peace and joy replaced this feeling. Rebecca is a wife and mother in addition to her role as a missionary. She has lived

abroad a little less than two years and while struggling with her language skills, feels it is worth the effort. Rebecca shared:

It is so important to communicate on a more personal level, you get to know people in the villages, and your own neighbors...to communicate with them on a personal level is much more meaningful than basic “Hello’s” and “Good-bye’s.” (Rebecca, Individual Interview, September 15, 2016)

Luke

Luke loves to serve others and feels that everyone, not just missionaries, should live on mission. He has only lived abroad for a few months and feels that language learning is imperative. Luke related:

Right now, I am not able to share the Gospel, to talk about Christ...I just don’t have the language necessary to do so. I have to go and find a translator or someone who can interpret what I am trying to say...it just takes my credibility out somehow...I feel like what I am saying isn’t being conveyed how it could be if I knew the language. (Luke, Individual Interview, September 4, 2016)

Max

Max has been serving abroad for the last six months. He loves serving for the Lord and helping others. He feels that language learning is extremely difficult but necessary to achieve in answering God’s calling more fully. He believes mission work is exciting but also a bit of a struggle. Max shared, “It is extremely important to learn the language here. I know that I am not effectively going to be able to share the Gospel without learning the language” (Max, Individual Interview, September 22, 2016).

Carly

Carly has lived abroad for five months. She has always looked for opportunities to serve the Lord and go where He sends her. She finds language learning necessary and feels that she has a gift for languages. She is enjoying her time in obedience to the Lord and feels language learning is necessary. Carly explained, “It is very important for me to learn the language here...very much so...if I don’t I will not be able to avoid broken language in sharing the Gospel which could affect the message” (Carly, Individual Interview, September 20, 2016).

Olivia

Olivia has a great love for people but struggles learning languages. She has lived abroad for a little over a year and is a mom and wife in addition to her role as a missionary. She does not enjoy language learning given all of her other duties. Olivia struggles with language learning but knows that it is necessary. She has surrendered to Christ in answering God’s calling on her life and out of necessity is trying to learn the language for communication. Olivia shared:

I believe that as hard as learning a foreign language is, it is necessary, yes, learning is necessary because I need to be able to communicate with people, even a basic conversation could turn into a talk about God...so I have to be able to do this... no matter how much I struggle with language learning. (Olivia, Individual Interview, September 18, 2016)

Chloe

Chloe started her work on the mission field right out of college. She has been in her current placement for one year. She loves languages, people, and cultures. She believes it is necessary to learn the language and culture of others to know them fully. Chloe explained her purpose for learning a foreign language:

Learning the language here is my purpose because without learning this language I am not able to talk about God, to share the Gospel...so learning this language enables me to do my purpose. (Chloe, Individual Interview, September 18, 2016)

Jason

Jason served on several short-term mission trips before feeling called abroad. He answered God's call and has been living in his non-native homeland for almost two years. In addition to his role as a missionary, Jason is also a husband and father. He believes social interactions in the community are essential for his language learning because they prove how important it is for communication. Jason shared, "In my interactions in the community, I want to have the words...to be able to communicate is very important. I have to know the language so well that I can communicate" (Jason, Individual Interview, September 10, 2016).

Michael

Michael has been living abroad for three months and is not only a missionary, but also a husband and father. He loves to serve and considers it his life purpose to be obedient to the Lord who he feels has called him overseas. He feels like he has to rely on God fully for strength and guidance in learning foreign language. He explained, "The biggest role my calling has on learning this language is that it helps me to stick through the ups and downs and difficulties of learning a new language" (Michael, Individual Interview, September 5, 2016).

Results

In the results below, I utilized participant statements verbatim without changing spelling or grammatical mistakes. I included statements and direct quotations from the co-researchers to support the essence of the themes that emerged during data analysis and to give a voice to the

descriptions of their lived experiences. This section is presented in order of the research questions.

Research Question One

The first question, “What are the experiences of Christians living in an immersed setting in a foreign country who need to learn a foreign language in order to fulfill a Christian calling?” was created to describe the lived experiences in context of a Christian calling. This question revealed two major themes: (a) Christians living immersed who need to learn a foreign language to fulfill a Christian calling encounter a sense of frustration and; (b) social and cultural interactions are both humbling and rewarding.

Sense of frustration. The lived experiences Christian missionaries described in the interviews, written responses and discussions, included a sense of frustration. Christians who need to learn a foreign language feel a great responsibility to fulfill their Christian calling. However, second language acquisition does not come quickly and a sense of frustration occurs for many co-researchers. Elena stated “I am frustrated when I can’t communicate in the way necessary...it is just frustrating” (Elena, Individual Interview, September 24, 2016). Amelia too expressed frustration and related:

Some people think I don’t want to hear their stories because they think I can’t understand which was just frustrating because it wasn’t true, not real and sometimes people would get mad and frustrated in not being able to communicate with me. (Amelia, Individual Interview, September 23, 2016)

Some of the co-researchers voiced the frustration as difficult. Olivia expressed, “It is so frustrating...just hard. I would have no idea what they were saying to me. At first, I cried a lot” (Olivia, Individual Interview, September 18, 2016).

Second language acquisition requires communication. Many co-researchers expressed frustration with basic communication. Jason articulated, “I became frustrated when I couldn’t say something that I wanted to” (Jason, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016). Max further conveyed, “Not being able to communicate some of the most basic things for survival is extremely frustrating” (Max, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016). Sometimes, attempts at communicating in the language were not successful. Some of the co-researchers shared about the frustration at being misunderstood when communicating. Luke revealed:

At first, I would try to ask for something, or say something, or just attempt to communicate and I am not sure why but the people would just nod or smile, it then became clear that they misunderstood me and that I couldn’t communicate completely or even elementary at first, was so frustrating. (Luke, Individual Interview, September 4, 2016)

Michael shared a similar experience about communication misunderstandings:

Sometimes the mistakes are simple and sometimes they are embarrassing. One instance some children asked me ‘How tall are you?’ I had to do some conversion to centimeters and then I told them. The kids looked at me all scrunched up in the faces and I realized that I told them I was 191 centimeters. They were like ‘uh-no- you are not that tall, we can tell.’ So sometimes, there are a lot of little mistakes that I am making. (Michael, Individual Interview, September 5, 2016)

Trying to communicate with native speakers and saying things grammatically incorrect, mispronouncing words and phrases, not understanding the language rules, or not being able to say what was needed are some experiences that bothered the co-researchers. Chloe stated, “It is frustrating, there have been so many moments where I have said the wrong thing” (Chloe,

Individual Interview, September, 18, 2016). Carly expressed the same frustration: “It is still frustrating because rules don’t make sense in the language so I sometimes don’t understand and speakers speak fast and soft” (Carly, Individual Interview, September 20, 2016).

Some of the co-researchers related frustration in communication and a desire to find speakers of their own native language. This aspect of relying on others for communication is frustrating in not being able to be self-expressing. Michael shared:

Trying to communicate is frustrating, I think I am understanding a little bit better why some people congregate with speakers of the same language...it is very very tempting for me to seek English speakers out because it takes so much focus and concentration as I am learning the language to actually communicate but I think it is worth it to push through and learn it. (Michael, Individual Interview, September 5, 2016)

This aspect of relying on others, not being able to communicate was frustrating but also more complex. For some co-researchers, the frustration took an emotional toll. Amelia related, “People are pretty kind when they see you are making an effort, but I get very frustrated and depressed when I can’t communicate” (Amelia, Individual Interview, September 23, 2016). Rebecca too expressed, “a need exists to overcome frustration of not having perfection” (Rebecca, Individual Interview, September 15, 2016).

Not being able to communicate with others and wanting to avoid a sense of frustration can lead to isolation. Olivia commented:

I was invited to a bible study when I first got here, I was so excited because I didn’t feel I was getting spiritually fed and I would love to be in a bible study, but I can’t do it and be frustrated the whole time. (Olivia, Individual interview, September 18, 2016)

Still, Max expressed:

It can get very mad and frustrated with learning. Not being able to speak the language is frustrating because you just want to communicate and um get something done and you can't because it is going to take awhile to figure it out to be able to communicate so um it can be frustrating. (Max, Individual Interview, September 22, 2016)

Other co-researchers conveyed similar experiences when trying to communicate with other native speakers. Carly shared, "As with anything in life there are good days and somewhere it is frustrating. It would be nice to just know the language or at least have it come easier but with time it gets better" (Carly, Individual Interview, August, 2016). She further related, "I have to speak very slow and I get frustrated and native speakers get impatient" (Carly, Individual Interview, September 20, 2016). However, even in frustration there is excitement as Max shared:

Living in a foreign country is very exciting, you never know what you are going to run into, who you are going to meet or what your next experience will be so it is pretty exciting but at the same time there are several frustrating, difficult, and stressful things that come along with it because living abroad can be extremely rewarding and extremely frustrating all at the same time. (Max, Individual Interview, September 22, 2016)

Some co-researchers expressed a frustration and sense of vulnerability that was unexpected.

Living immersed trying to learn the language while navigating day to day tasks with others in the culture created not only times of frustration but a sense of being frustrated because of feeling like "easy targets" (Michael, Individual Interview, September 5, 2016). Michael shared:

How vulnerable we are, people could take advantage of us in so many different ways, we don't really know and pick up on it because we don't know the language...we are easy

targets when we don't know the language. (Michael, Individual Interview, September 5, 2016)

Many co-researchers expressed feelings of being discouraged and overwhelmed in living abroad away from their native language and culture while trying to communicate with native speakers. Rebecca shared, "Initially, hardships and discouragement as we were being challenged to one of the hardest languages in the world" (Rebecca, Individual Interview, September 15, 2016). Max described learning a foreign language as "not easy at all and sometimes stressful, not knowing the language makes living abroad much more stressful" (Max, Open-ended Questionnaire, August 2016). Some co-researchers expressed the challenge of being discouraged. Jason shared:

Having to appear quite lost at times is the most deflating. Especially when one is trying to establish credibility with the people, those humbling moments are difficult to assimilate. Sometimes, after a misunderstanding, people begin to treat you like a child or basic idiot, when in reality, you didn't understand one small aspect of the moment and you've completely lost their confidence in your intellect. (Jason, Open-ended Questionnaire, August 2016)

Second Language Acquisition in an immersed setting while being accustomed to a new way of life is overwhelming for many co-researchers. Chloe shared, "This is my first encounter in a different language completely immersed, I was so overwhelmed and I felt really inadequate and it made me want to push away the language instead of embrace it" (Chloe, Individual Interview, September 18, 2016). These initial feelings of inadequacies lead to lower self-confidence and less desire to interact more in the culture socially with native speakers. Luke

explained, “It is really hard, just so much new stuff to learn, new language, new culture, and it just stressful at times” (Luke, Individual Interview, September 4, 2016).

The co-researchers experienced frustration, rewarding humble social and cultural interactions, and a sense of discouragement and overwhelming feelings. These experiences are challenging for second language acquisition. However, the co-researchers expressed a desire to continue despite these experiences and circumstances in order to fulfill their Christian callings of spreading the Gospel. This ability to communicate to others in the native language of the immersed country is not only necessary, but also personal and more meaningful.

The co-researchers overall descriptions of frustration in their lived experiences details: frustration in communication, misunderstanding, and the emotional drain of frustration. It is a struggle to want to communicate with others and not be able to do so or not to have adequate skills for effective communication. Many attempts at communication, especially initially, can result in miscommunication either on the part of the native speaker not being able to understand the co-researchers attempt or by the co-researcher not being able to understand the native speaker. These social and cultural interactions are both humbling and rewarding.

The humility and reward of social and cultural interactions. Living immersed brings about many opportunities to interact socially and culturally with others. These interactions create an opportunity to utilize the language as well as learn about another culture. Many of the co-researchers describe living immersed abroad to be different and exciting. Max described living immersed as “overall it is very exciting and rewarding” (Max, Individual Interview, September 22, 2016). Carly shared:

For most part, all of my experiences have been good so far, it has been an adjustment but been an experience to learn a new culture and just the way they do things differently.

Experiencing the different aspects of the culture have been cool. Hospitality, here if you come to someone's house or eat, very hospitable, they invite a huge group of people, and they only have two rooms, they still invite them over. (Carly, Individual Interview, September 20, 2016)

Learning the language and the culture(s) of the place you are called to serve is important. Jason shared, "I enjoy being out in the community and interacting with others- It is true that you just don't learn a language, you learn a culture" (Jason, Individual Interview, September 10, 2016). Rebecca shared a similar idea, "Learning the culture, getting to know people and when they see us in town they get excited, we are living among the people in a whole different experience" (Rebecca, Individual Interview, September 15, 2016). These experiences in learning about new food, new festivals, traffic patterns, and everyday life are both eye-opening and provide opportunities for cultural and social engagement. Chloe described her experiences interacting in the culture with excitement. She stated, "Buying food and accessibility to food is very different, the food you eat and how you cook is very different but I enjoy this warm cultural environment" (Chloe, Individual Interview, September 18, 2016). She wrote, "One of my favorite aspects of being a missionary is simply the fact that we live life among the people" (Chloe, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016).

Other co-researchers expressed a desire to try to interact more socially and culturally. Michael shared "I'm trying to embrace the new language and use it more and more often. We attend church (where the language is spoken) and try to branch out" (Michael, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016). Living immersed, the social interactions bring cultural awareness and opportunity to communicate. Olivia shared "It forces you to know the culture and you have to be able to communicate, you must learn the language, must learn how to get around and such"

(Olivia, Individual Interview, September 18, 2016). Jason relayed a similar experience that “language learning becomes more deeply embedded when you interact with culture and people” (Jason, Individual Interview, September 10, 2016).

Social and cultural interactions are positive because of the relationships that are built with native speakers. Chloe described her experiences living in the culture positively:

We shop in the same markets, we play soccer on the same team, eat at the same restaurants...leaving the house means seeing someone you know. And communicating with that person builds relationships that can further the work of the Lord. (Chloe, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016)

All of these social and cultural interactions assist language learning. Living immersed created opportunities for interacting with native speakers. Michael shared, “I try to practice what I’m learning with anybody I meet” (Michael, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016). Jason shared:

I have found language to be sort of a jumping off point in many friendships and somewhat of a unifying item in life. When I am confused in some aspect of culture, I use my deficiency in the language to begin the conversation.... “I don’t think I understood what you mean when you said ...” And suddenly we are engaged in some cultural education. I often blame it on the language differences so that I can dig into the cultural differences. (Jason, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016)

Rebecca shared a similar experience, “What strengthens us is immersion, getting into the language, into the culture, hearing it around us, asking questions” (Rebecca, Individual Interview, September 15, 2016). Some co-researchers value the social and cultural interactions and seek them out. Chloe expressed, “Here people stay connected in a really sweet way, I have

been intentional in having conversations in the language and it is easier to speak the language and learn it that way” (Chloe, Individual Interview, September 18, 2016). Chloe shared:

I joined a soccer team in order to build relationships with younger girls, share the love of God, and get free language lessons along the way. Returning the second year, I have seen a huge difference in my ability to speak and understand. Just being able to answer a question at the gate is encouraging and help me desire to want to learn and grow more in this way. (Chloe, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016)

These cultural and social interactions can also be humbling when trying to communicate. Michael stated “You are gonna make 1,000 mistakes, so many mistakes I make every day” (Michael, Individual Interview, September 5, 2016). Regarding the humility of cultural interactions, Chloe wrote:

I must be intentional to start conversations and engage in German with local shop owners, taxi drivers, fruit stand vendors. The biggest setback is simply my own fear of failure. To learn a language that desire for perfection must be shoved aside and to look a little silly...well, that’s ok. (Chloe, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016)

Elena shared “I had to be willing to be humble enough to talk to them in their own language and I have to not get caught up in ‘not good enough’” (Elena, Individual Interview, September 24, 2016). Some co-researchers discussed the importance of making an effort to communicate with others. Luke stated “Living abroad in a learning this language, well speaking it is such a challenge and I have to humble myself, dig deep and find the confidence to just speak whether it is correct or not” (Luke, Individual Interview, September 4, 2016). Max expressed humility in his experiences, “I frequently feel like a child that doesn’t know how to speak yet” (Max, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016).

Understanding culture practices and norms is humbling and rewarding to learn. Michael said, “I know I have broken cultural norms, so many people have shown patience” (Michael, Individual Interview, September 5, 2016). The reward of cultural interactions in language acquisition is worth it. Olivia shared “At first, I couldn’t understand anything then one day I could understand after some time, not high level, deep thoughts which is kinda cool” (Olivia, Individual Interview, September 18, 2016). The personal rewards of growing language skills are comforting and build self-esteem. Rebecca stated, “Once you grasp the basics, there is a sense of confidence, a sense of ease” (Rebecca, Individual Interview, September 15, 2016). Some social and cultural interactions were humbling in a different aspect. Michael shared “I feel uncomfortable with the level of attention we get, possibly because I’m simultaneously realizing just how much privilege I was born into as a white, American male” (Michael, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016).

Social and cultural interactions in language learning are both humbling and rewarding. Learning the language, appropriate cultural norms, and culture(s) is exciting and challenging. These interactions can create a boost in self-confidence or can be discouraging and overwhelming. The role calling plays in assisting these struggles to facilitate language learning is key for Christian missionaries in second language acquisition.

Research Question Two

The second question “What role does calling play for Christian missionaries in learning a foreign language in an immersed setting?” was created to describe how calling motivates foreign language learning for Christian missionaries. This question revealed two major themes: the importance of needing the native language or as the co-researchers described it, heart language

communication, and a need to spread the Gospel. The co-researchers described both of these themes in comments and written statements.

Heart language communication. According to the co-researchers, ‘heart language’ is the native first language someone speaks. It is something necessary for communication regarding topics such as religion and as simple as a need to communicate. Elena shared “Language is so important to speak to them in their heart language, it is necessary because I have to be prepared to explain in their context” (Elena, Individual Interview, September 24, 2016). Olivia described the role her calling has on foreign language learning as simply, “Yes! My calling brought me here and I am learning, I’m learning because I need to be able to communicate with people” (Olivia, Individual Interview, September 18, 2016). Olivia shared a similar role in learning the heart language, “Talking at a deeper level, a heart or spiritual level, is very difficult in a second language. That makes friendships stay more shallow” (Olivia, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016). Communication in words builds a bridge to relationships. Chloe shared “the quickest way to bond with another person is to communicate with words” (Chloe, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016). Michael also expressed:

I doubt I would build enough trust with non-English speakers here (who are the vast majority) to actually be able to talk on a deeper spiritual level required for any verbal kind of ministry. (Michael, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016)

The importance of learning the heart language to communicate effectively for living out the Christian missionaries call to serve was immediate. Max described learning the heart language as:

Learning the heart language of the people you are reaching out to is imperative in reaching those lost souls for the Kingdom. It has been difficult to talk with native

speakers here in English and try to explain the Gospel in a way that relates to them.

Without knowing the language of the people you are ministering too, it is setting yourself up for failure. The biggest challenge in fulfilling my call to serve is not being able to effectively communicate the Gospel to the ones I am reaching out to in their heart language. (Max, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016)

Christian missionaries have not only the responsibility and desire of ministering to others but also the added motivation of being able to do so in the native heart language of those that they are reaching. Max expressed:

I have to know the language because if I am going to witness to someone, I need to do so in the heart language, to be effective enough to minister to someone I don't have the ability to do so because it is so important to speak to someone in their heart language, their native language because that is the one they truly understand, it is very difficult to communicate about Jesus in broken language skills. (Max, Individual Interview, September 22, 2016)

Broken language skills are common among those in the beginning stages of second language acquisition. Amelia expressed "I am picking a few words at a time but I really think it would be awesome to speak their heart language and really listen to their heart, so yes, language is really really important in my calling" (Amelia, Individual Interview, September 23, 2016). Speaking to others in their heart language in social interactions can be difficult but necessary, especially when discussing issues of the heart. Max conveyed, "trying to communicate the Gospel is difficult because it is something dealing with the heart and emotions and needs to be communicated in their language" (Max, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016). Carly too shared a similar experience:

If you want to talk to people about God and salvation you can't do it unless you do it in the language not because they don't understand English but because they don't understand it well enough and English is not their heart language. So much rides on speaking to someone in their heart language when it comes to witnessing and teaching them about God. When it comes to the everyday life here being able to speak the language or not is not a big deal because you can still manage to get by and most people know enough English. But when it comes to really building relationships with people, talking to them about God, and anything related to faith it is very difficult almost impossible to do without knowing the language. (Carly, Online Discussion Forum, September, 2016)

Speaking to others in their heart language is an immediate reason for Christian missionaries to learn a foreign language in answering their calling. The co-researchers find value in building relationships and creating opportunities when they are able to communicate in the heart language. Bridging this gap in communication enables Christian missionaries to fulfill their calling and assist them in spreading the gospel.

Need to spread the Gospel. Despite the challenges in foreign language all of the co-researchers related a commitment to spreading the Gospel and service to others and God. Olivia stated, “none of these challenges kept us or will keep us from serving” (Olivia, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016). Chloe expressed her need to spread the Gospel and serve others in terms of sacrifice:

Sacrificing moving your younger sister into her dorm or not meeting your nephew until he is almost walking. Those challenges are hard. And sometimes they make me cry and long for the comforts of America. But then I think of Jesus on the cross. And His Pain,

And His suffering. And, I know that Jesus paid it all for me, so I can for Him. (Chloe, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016)

Needing to spread the Gospel motivates many Christian missionaries to learn the foreign language of their host country. Elena shared, “If I didn’t learn the language, I couldn’t preach the Gospel in the way I knew how, I want to learn their language so I can spread the Gospel” (Elena, Individual Interview, September 24, 2016). Closing the gap between people with language in order to share the Gospel is important. Rebecca commented, “My calling has a very important role on my language learning because I want to share the Gospel message. When you learn a language, it is important to bridge the gap with understanding” (Rebecca, Individual Interview, September 15, 2016).

Language and the ability to communicate in the language are necessary components in sharing the Gospel. Rebecca stated, “At times we had encounters to share the Gospel and we lacked the language skills necessary” (Rebecca, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016). Communicating effectively to others drives Christian missionaries abroad in second language acquisition. Max stated, “My calling has a very high role in my learning this language, without knowing the heart language I can’t effectively witness to others and give them the Gospel” (Max, Individual Interview, September 22, 2016). Amelia shared:

At first, it was really hard to make a difference because of the lack of language, was challenging to communicate about Christ without having the language skills so I had to learn to communicate to them. I had to rely fully on God for understanding. (Amelia, Individual Interview, September 23, 2016)

Chloe too conveyed a similar experience:

There was a little boy and one day, all of sudden, I felt the Holy Spirit tell me to share the Gospel, I don't know, I tried my best to share the Gospel, I wanted to have the words and after that...I need to know and learn the language so well that I can witness to anyone I talk to, most motivating factor. (Chloe, Individual Interview, September 18, 2016)

Connections between fulfilling their calling and second language acquisition occur daily in interactions and work as the co-researchers serve. Carly expressed "Choosing to come overseas to work on the mission field has everything to do with my foreign language learning. I would not be learning the language if it wasn't for coming here to serve" (Carly, Online Discussion Forum, September, 2016). Amelia shared how important learning a foreign language is to answering her call to spread the Gospel: "The need to communicate with others in their own language is everything" (Amelia, Online Discussion Forum, September, 2016).

The importance of learning the heart language in order to fulfill a call to serve and a need to spread the Gospel are motivating factors for Christian missionaries. Bridging the gap in social interactions and a desire for the ability to communicate, assist second language acquisition for Christian missionaries. These social interactions and need to communicate come with both great rewards and challenges.

Research Question Three

The third question "What challenges do Christian missionaries in immersed settings experience in the need to learn a foreign language?" was created to describe the challenges Christian missionaries encounter in second language acquisition. Three main themes emerged include: (a) the difficulty of second language acquisition; (b) the time needed to learn a foreign language; and (c) the challenges in communication are depressing and isolating.

Second language acquisition is difficult. Many difficulties exist in second language acquisition without the proper tools for learning. Many of the co-researchers discussed the challenges of language learning when encountering differing spoken accents. Olivia shared, “There are so many different accents, have to get used to different people and how they speak the words” (Olivia, Individual Interview, September 18, 2016). Jason expressed, “The accents are different and many different mother- tongues...sorting through this is was a nightmare initially and learning to understand certain people was tough” (Jason, Individual Interview, September 10, 2016). Chloe also shared, “The accents of people that makes it really hard to understand them” (Chloe, Individual Interview, September 18, 2016).

Sorting out different accents and following conversations in context came with difficulties. Michael shared, “I find it difficult to keep my mind engaged when I’m hearing rapid fire speech (in the foreign language), those times feel like immersion more in the ‘drowning and unable to gasp for air’ sense of the word” (Michael, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016). Max shared similarly, “I struggle with the language and have a very hard time speaking it, but I do understand more and more of it each day” (Max, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016). He also related, “It is very difficult to learn and speak the language effectively” (Max, Individual Interview, September 22, 2016).

Second language acquisition is difficult but in time, it does happen. Chloe shared, “I couldn’t communicate at first because it was difficult, a switch flipped and I can understand in my second year” (Chloe, Individual Interview, September 18, 2016). Not having the answers to language questions while learning is difficult. Carly shared, “It is difficult to learn because I ask why and question new grammatical structures” (Carly, Individual Interview, September 20, 2016).

Social interactions, communicating with others, and attempting to learn the language brings about a unique set of challenges. Sometimes the challenge exists in figuring out how to learn the language or how to navigate social interactions in the language. Jason related, “somehow I knew language learning didn’t just happen from the textbook” (Jason, Individual Interview, September 10, 2016). Amelia discussed the difficulty of navigating social interactions while trying to do so in the language, “communicating in serving others is challenging, I have to be careful not to offend them in my communication and learning, it was difficult to learn” (Amelia, Individual Interview, September 23, 2016). Carly shared a similar experience:

There are times it is difficult when you need to know the language to communicate, it is easier to communicate if you are able to do it in the language. Those times it is a challenge and all I can do is try to use what I know and speak brokenly hoping they understand. (Carly, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016)

Navigating communication during social interactions, understanding different accents, and understanding differing grammatical structures can be difficult in second language acquisition. The need for a time dedicated to learning the language is important for success. However, having time to dedicate to learning a foreign language is often more of a challenge than second language acquisition.

Time necessary to learn. One challenge for Christian missionaries in second language acquisition is finding or making the time necessary for learning. Many co-researchers shared challenge of experiences that required them to do other tasks, the time it takes to learn, and the amount of time it takes to communicate. Michael shared, “It takes way too long to understand the whole context of what they are saying” (Michael, Individual Interview, September 5, 2016).

The number of other responsibilities in day to day life as well as ministry make it challenging for finding time to commit to learning language outside of social interactions. Max shared, “I have to work, to take care of work, responsibilities and have a lot to do, traveling, language learning needs to be only responsibility until you learn it” (Max, Individual Interview, September 22, 2016). Carly too expressed, “There is a lack of time to focus on the language and learning” (Carly, Individual Interview, September 20, 2016). The lack of time creates a challenge for Christian missionaries. Chloe stated “The biggest challenge is making time to learn this language, doesn’t leave much energy for studying for trying to focus on a different language” (Chloe, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016). Carly also shared similarly, “I think another challenge is not being completely focused on language learning because we are learning the language but still serving full time at the school and church, focusing completely on the language I think would allow for better and possibly faster learning” (Carly, Online Discussion Forum, September, 2016).

Time was a factor many Christian missionaries found in their need to learn a foreign language. There are many responsibilities that the co-researchers have in addition to the fact that they serve in many different capacities. Additionally, it takes time to understand native speakers in social interactions. The inability to communicate effectively in the heart language of native speakers can create depression and a sense of isolation for many Christian missionaries in second language acquisition.

Depression and isolation. Learning a foreign language in a non-native homeland can be isolating. Many factors already discussed are challenging for Christian missionaries that can result in depression and isolation. Olivia shared “it was so isolating at first, not being able to

communicate with others in the community” (Olivia, Individual Interview, September 18, 2016).

Olivia further explained:

Initially I was depressed because I knew I was going to have to learn at a high level. I felt so worthless and unsuccessful all the time, it was not good for me. I am very used to the American system where people give you kudos for your best effort and that just doesn't exist elsewhere. (Olivia, Individual Interview, September 18, 2016)

Living far away from home apart from native culture and language is isolating for many co-researchers. Suddenly, they find themselves in new surroundings, a new culture, and a new language without the ability to connect with others in community. Olivia wrote:

But some of the biggest challenges stemmed from not living near family and friends and a good church. Because of the internet this is harder and easier. Communication is easier, but you are not able to fully leave one place and commit to another, because the ties to 'home' are so easily maintained. It is hard to live with your feet in two worlds. (Olivia, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016)

Some co-researchers shared a difficulty and sense of isolation in this separation. Max shared, “Being away from family and friends, they are your support system and being away from that support can make life difficult” (Max, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016). Chloe too stated, “The hardest thing is sacrificing family” (Chloe, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016).

This isolation can be emotionally draining and create an atmosphere of isolation and depression. Luke described this isolation as “an intense sense of seclusion and very draining, so much so that I wonder if I don't seclude myself away sometime to get rest” (Luke, Individual Interview, September 4, 2016). Many co-researchers expressed an isolation from the culture.

Carly shared, “I have to read lessons in church in the foreign language for Bible studies the majority of the time and I don’t understand all of the words because I am still learning” (Carly, Individual Interview, September 20, 2016).

Olivia further conveyed:

Living in a foreign land and learning something difficult was lonely. There were no regular English Bible studies or prayer groups. The support system for our spiritual lives was lacking. This is compounded by having children to take care of...everyone need support in the process. (Olivia, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016)

The changes in spiritual growth opportunities create an atmosphere of isolation as well. Carly expressed, “The church services, classes, and activities are all in the language so it more of necessity to learn the language if we want to be able to follow, participate, or teach in these areas” (Carly, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016). Carly further explained:

The challenge of having church services, classes, and activities in the local language. Since we do not know the language well enough to really follow along and understand well we are not receiving the spiritual feeding from the teaching, songs, and prayer. This means it is a big job for us to make sure we are getting this in our one on one time and maybe seeking out other sources however, it is different and not quite the same as having the body together and the teaching from the pastor. Church is a little different for us then and is sometimes more a language lesson than a spiritual lesson. (Carly, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016)

Second language acquisition while living abroad in an immersed setting brings excitement but also challenges in social and cultural interactions. These interactions can lead to depression and isolation if engagement in the culture does not exist. Christian missionaries face

many challenges in their lived experiences to learn a foreign language to fulfill their calling. Many utilize various coping strategies to assist them in dealing with these challenges.

Research Question Four

The fourth research question “What coping strategies do Christians employ in the need to learn a foreign language?” was created to describe how Christian missionaries living in immersed settings are dealing with the challenges of second language acquisition. This question revealed three major themes: (a) the importance of prayer and relying on God, (b) language learning assistance and strategies, and (d) need for cultural adaptation.

Prayer and reliance on God. There is a clear connection between the reason Christian missionaries answer their calling, and how they rely on God to face the challenges presented by their calling. Most of the co-researchers discussed the importance of relying on God and prayer. Elena discussed “it is important to find encouragement and guidance from God, have a relationship with Him and have a passion and commitment to learn the language...I look to Christ, I ask God to show me how to get the message across” (Elena, Individual Interview, September 24, 2016). Olivia shared, “In the beginning, I would go for a long bike ride and pray when it was difficult; pray that the Lord will help your mindset and to have a good attitude because it is not easy, it’s just not” (Olivia, Individual Interview, September 18, 2016).

The importance of prayer and relying on God was vital for the co-researchers. Rebecca shared, “A prayer team and a good support base offers stability, yes, a good sound spiritual base and support system” (Rebecca, Individual Interview, September 15, 2016). There are many challenges on the field as well as dangers, at times. Amelia expressed, “I had to rely fully on God, there are a lot of dangers with certain cultures, I also have to have a relationship with God using the skill sets He has given me” (Amelia, Individual Interview, September 23, 2016). Luke

said simply, “Without God, this journey wouldn’t be possible...I need Him for everything” (Luke, Individual Interview, September 4, 2016).

A reliance on God and having a relationship with Him in prayer help Christian missionaries cope with the challenges they face on the field. Prayer support off the field from others who are invested in their mission work helps them as well. These two aspects assisted the co-researchers in dealing with second language acquisition on a spiritual level but not on an everyday practical level in social interactions. Personal learning strategies and seeking out language learning assistance helped Christian missionaries cope in the thick of communication woes and challenges.

Language learning assistance and strategies. Language learning strategies and assistance help Christian missionaries living abroad desiring to learn a foreign language. All of the researchers related an importance of a need for preparation before arrival as a coping strategy. Olivia shared “learn as much as you can before you arrive to a new culture and language” (Olivia, Individual Interview, September 18, 2016). Seeking out assistance from others in forms of conversation partners, lessons, or tutoring assisted in being more successful. Olivia stated, “I had 2 language conversation partners that I met with...for at least an hour a week with each” (Olivia, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016). Carly too shared, “I spend 3 days a week for an hour and half doing private language lessons with a young man in our church” (Carly, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016). After dealing with frustration and challenges, many of the co-researchers sought out assistance. Rebecca related, “Eventually we hired a language tutor which helped bridge the gap in language learning” (Rebecca, Individual Interview, September 15, 2016). Max also shared, “I have three lessons a week with a personal tutor to learn the language, it isn’t easy” (Max, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016).

Many of the co-researchers discussed resorting to other means of communication as a coping strategy. Olivia stated, “I used other ways to communicate such as body language” (Olivia, Individual Interview, September 18, 2016). Olivia wrote “It takes some gestures and a dictionary sometimes, but we figure it out. Stores and taxis are not a problem now.” (Olivia, Open-ended questionnaire, August, 2016). Elena too utilized “hand signals and signs” (Elena, Individual Interview, September 24, 2016). Utilizing hand gestures became part of everyday life in an attempt at communication when language skills were still emerging. Luke related, “I used body language to get my point across because I had a limited vocabulary base, especially at first” (Luke, Individual Interview, September 4, 2016).

Hand gestures were not the only coping strategy used in communication attempts. Some of the co-researchers described experiences using multiple personal strategies. Chloe expressed, “I used hand gestures at first, with certain words, I get around using another word, use pictures and this helps to explain something, a lot of pointing occurs” (Chloe, Individual Interview, September 18, 2016). However, some co-researchers wanted to try to seek out others or utilize a translator to assist in communication. Max admitted, “I seek a translator to help” (Max, Individual Interview, September 22, 2016). Carly too stated, “My biggest coping strategy is to fall back on what I know which is in English, another coping strategy I guess is to find someone to translate for me instead of trying to suffer through saying it myself” (Carly, Online Discussion Forum, September, 2016). Michael discussed utilizing a variety of personal language learning strategies. He mentioned:

I’m using Google Translate and that helps for like single words at a time. It still gets really confusing when people talk way faster than I can like whip out a phone and have them speak into the phone and it’s awkward to have somebody speak into a phone

anyway. So, I use hand signals and stuff- there is a lot of that and do tend to try and find people who know a little English. (Michael, Individual Interview, September 5, 2016)

Rebecca had her own set of personal learning strategies. She shared “I carry notebooks around with me and if I didn’t or don’t understand something I ask them to write it down, carrying around this notebook with vocabulary words and if I learned a new word I wrote it down and tried to practice” (Rebecca, Individual Interview, September 15, 2016).

Despite the challenges in communication, personal learning strategies helped Christian missionaries to cope with their novice communication skills. Amelia shared her coping strategies which included “Body language-communication from the heart very spiritual regardless, speak with broken language to meet in the middle or utilize a translator from time to time, and just grab a piece of paper and pen and draw a picture” (Amelia, Individual Interview, September 23, 2016). Carly utilized “using motions and pointing to communicate, visually explain myself, do the action to convey my meaning, and ask speakers to speak slower” (Carly, Individual Interview, September 20, 2016). Carly expressed:

There are times especially when we go visit villages where the language is a tribal language but they know the national language and it would be nice to be able to communicate with them and talk with them, I do my best to speak a little and try to also express through body language and facial expressions what I want to convey. (Carly, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016)

Jason shared a similar experience:

In the beginning, I applied myself to listening to a lot of media if I wasn’t excelling at oral comprehension. I would rehearse conversations in my head if I was lacking

phraseology. I also began to read in the language with the desire to have a wider vocabulary. (Jason, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016)

Other co-researchers described utilizing strategies in second language acquisition and learning from this necessity. Amelia expressed, “Memorize new words every day and start to use them right away, I start to learn from this need” (Amelia, Online Discussion Forum, September, 2016).

Hand gestures, the need for language tutoring, conversational partners, and other personal learning strategies assisted Christian missionaries in coping with their new surrounding and communicating with native speakers in the language. Challenging cultural and social interaction necessitate using coping strategies. When encountering and coping with a variety of cultural and social interactions, Christian missionaries found cultural adaptation to be of great importance.

Cultural adaptation. Christian missionaries described coping with differing cultures in immersed setting by means of adaptation. Some co-researchers described this experience of adapting as letting go of themselves. Elena shared “I forgot myself and committed myself to let go of my own culture” (Elena, Individual Interview, September 24, 2016). Amelia expressed a similar experience: “There are so many ways to view the world so I need to remember this and have the right mindset and adapt, if necessary... I have to prepare myself deep in the language and culture” (Amelia, Individual Interview, September 24, 2016). Many co-researchers discussed the importance of embracing differences and embracing cultures. Carly shared “I need to embrace the culture, remember to go with low expectations and then everything will meet or exceed the expectation, and understand there are things that don’t make sense to me in the culture” (Carly, Individual Interview, September 20, 2016). Cultural adaptation and changing mindsets are both vital components with coping in new surroundings abroad. Carly expressed “There are definitely things you have to get used to and mindsets you kind of have to

change/adjust” (Carly, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016). Chloe too shared “need so much flexibility, a lot of things are different including the way people respond, having the right mindset helps, never saying something is weird or strange” (Chloe, Individual Interview, September 18, 2016).

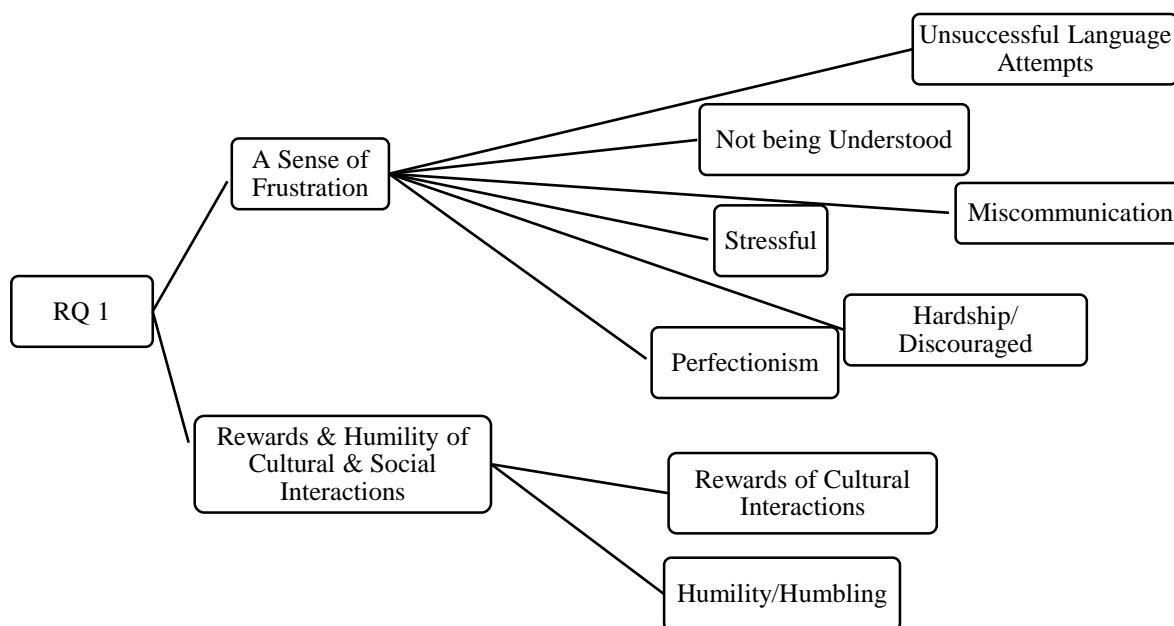
Engaging in the culture helps in adaptation as the co-researchers began to immerse themselves they began to engage in the community that ultimately assisted second language acquisition. Chloe related, “Immersing oneself in the culture is the quickest way to learn a language, initiating conversations and joining the community are two main ways of coping” (Chloe, Open-ended Questionnaire, August, 2016). Jason shared a similar experience:

I was intentional about starting conversations with people, I learned to say phrase and thank people in the culture for being patient with me as a language learner, like, ‘thank you in advance for being patient with me as I learn the language’ or ‘the struggle continues’ and laugh which won people over, you have to have a right language attitude, you can’t go into it with a bad attitude..this helped. (Jason, Individual Interview, September 10, 2016)

The ability and willingness to adapt to the culture(s) that Christian missionaries were exposed to assisted them in coping with their new surroundings. Coping strategies were an important part of their lived experiences as they went about daily life engaging socially and culturally. Above all else, it is clear from the co-researchers that Christian missionaries who need to learn a foreign language to fulfill their call to serve in immersed settings face many unique challenging and rewarding situations, all worth experiencing to share the love of Jesus Christ.

Summary

Christian missionaries living abroad in immersed settings experience excitement with many humbling social and cultural interactions. However, the inability to communicate reveals a sense of frustration, discouragement and overwhelming feelings for many. The need to learn a foreign language while living abroad stems from a deep desire to share the Gospel and minister to those they are serving. Many challenges occur in this need, such as difficulties in second language acquisition, lacking the time necessary to learn, and the lack of communication skills can lead to depression and isolation. Finally, Christian missionaries utilize a variety of coping strategies to fulfill their calling and need to learn a foreign language. These coping strategies of relying on God, praying, seeking out language assistance and personal learning strategies as well as cultural adaptation enable Christian missionaries to remain in their work and service to others and God. A summary of all themes and sub-themes are illustrated in Figure 1.



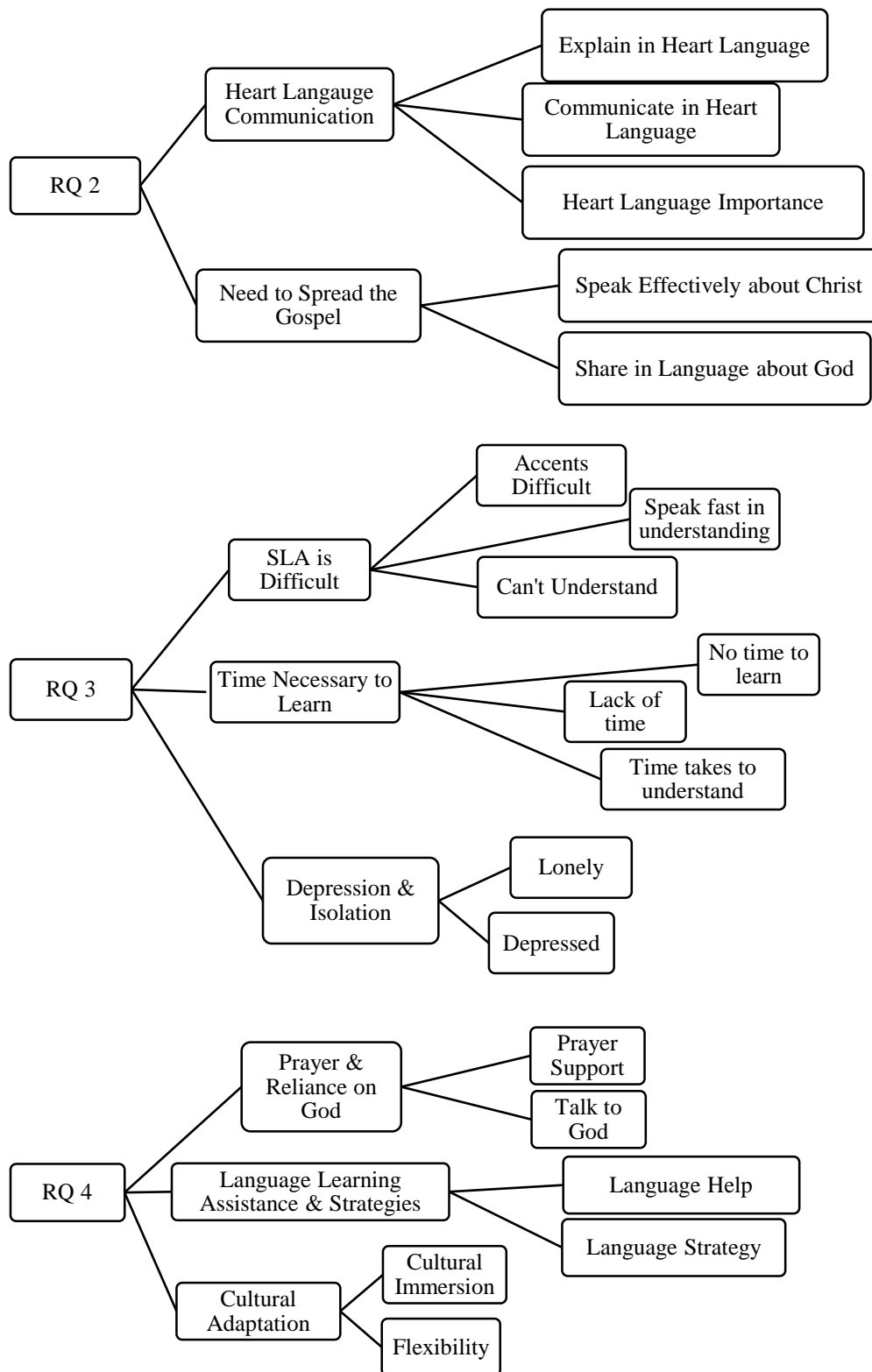


Figure 1. Summary of research themes.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS

Overview

This study reported the lived experiences of Christian missionaries who need to learn a foreign language to fulfill their Christian callings to serve. Chapter 5 includes the summary and discussion of the findings, a discussion of the implications and limitations, and recommendations for future research. The lived experiences of Christian missionaries living abroad in immersed settings who need to learn a foreign language to fulfill their Christian calling to serve was examined.

Summary of Findings

Christian missionaries living abroad in immersed setting to fulfill a Christian calling live out a life of devotion, obedience in their faith, and service to others and God. Living abroad has many challenges and rewards. However, one facet is clear and that is the need to learn a foreign language to fulfill that calling comes with its own set of struggles, challenges, and rewards. Interacting socially and culturally with native speakers builds bridges not only in opportunities to create community and foster relationships but assists in second language acquisition.

Christian missionaries encounter many experiences living abroad but a sense of frustration in lack of communication skills is the predominant theme. The co-researchers genuinely wanted to be in the community, making friendships, and spreading the love of Christ. However, initially, this was a real source of frustration as they were eager and excited upon arrival, started to interact socially, and began struggling through basic conversations yet alone more complex ones involving spiritual matters. A sense of frustration occurred in their attempts to love and serve others.

Other experiences such as the reward and humbling experience of social and cultural interactions occurred for Christian missionaries. These experiences, though rewarding, created

feelings of discouragement and being overwhelmed when they were not able to communicate in the language necessary. The need to communicate in the language, to learn the foreign language was motivated by the desire to communicate in the heart language of the native land in order to fulfill their Christian calling. To serve others and to spread the Gospel motivated Christian missionaries to learn the foreign language.

Second language acquisition came with challenges for Christian missionaries. Many of the co-researchers expressed the difficulties in communicating, the lack of skills necessary to do so effectively, and the lack of time necessary to commit to learning the foreign language. This inability to communicate with others in social interactions created feelings of depression and isolation for many Christian missionaries.

Remembering why they were living abroad was important for Christian missionaries in the midst of the challenges. Many co-researchers conveyed coping with the difficulties of second language acquisition by relying on God through prayer. Other coping strategies utilized include, language-learning assistance in the form of seeking out conversational partners or tutors, personal learning strategies such as following hand gestures, memorizing words, and writing down key phrases. Lastly, Christian missionaries relied on their abilities to adapt to the culture to cope with the differing environments that were called to serve.

Discussion

Christian missionaries experience a variety of interactions living abroad. The main theme is a sense of frustration in the inability to communicate. Despite the challenges encountered, the co-researchers sought ways to interact culturally so that they could ultimately fulfill their calling in spreading the Gospel. The need to share about spiritual matters required a certain level of communication abilities in the language. The communication struggles involving

daily life and spirituality were a source of frustration for many co-researchers. Frustration in learning a foreign language abroad has been documented in literature (Stewart, 2010; Wang, 2010). A sense of frustration occurred for missionaries in their attempts to love and serve others. Sills (2008) found that many Christian missionaries have frustration in communication with native speakers.

This frustration of experiences in their need to learn a foreign language was both humbling and rewarding for Christian missionaries in regards to their cultural and social interactions. The co-researchers expressed a great love for living among the local people, for the small hurdles in communication, and love for learning about another culture. Walking among the people, shopping with them and forging relationships by other means than verbal communication began to be not only a coping strategy, but also one of the greatest and rewarding experiences for Christian missionaries forming relationships with their new neighbors. Social and cultural interactions led to development in second language acquisition by obtaining the language from native speakers (Vygotsky, 1978). Many expressed how they had to humble themselves, give up a desire for perfectionism, and attempt to communicate.

These same experiences of social interactions in the need to learn a foreign language for Christian missionaries were also discouraging and overwhelming despite the rewards previously mentioned. The difficulties in second language acquisition can result in feelings of discouragement and ultimately result in missionaries leaving the field (Verwer, 2003). The co-researchers explained how discouraging it was to not be able to communicate even basic needs to others, fear of being taken advantage of by others, and having feelings of low self-confidence. The sudden immersion and need to communicate with quick language occurring all around them created feelings of stress, anxiety and a sense of being overwhelmed. Motivation and anxiety

can contribute to success in second language acquisition (Bataller, 2010; Dixon et al., 2012). However, Christian missionaries conveyed that it was necessary to walk through the social and cultural interactions to learn a foreign language living immersed. They related this necessity to be able to communicate in the heart language of the native speakers so that they could spread the Gospel and fulfill their Christian callings.

Second language acquisition for Christian missionaries was motivated by the need to fulfill their Christian callings. The ability to speak to someone on a more personal level required the usage of the native or heart language of the target audience. Verwer (2003) conveyed that the need to learn a foreign language for Christian missionaries is necessary for success. Christian missionaries expressed the importance of discussing emotional, spiritual, and more complex matters in the heart language in order to communicate effectively. Culbertson (2015) related a biblical model for missions that listed the importance of speaking the language of the community for Christian missionaries. The ability to speak to others in the community allowed Christian missionaries to explain things, especially spiritual matters, in a context that others were able to understand. Cousineau et al. (2010) suggested that the ability to do ones' work on the field contributes to missionary success and assists their calling. Learning the foreign language allowed them to build relationships that were less superficial and more meaningful, which opened doors for them to minister and share the Gospel.

Christian missionaries are living out The Great Commission as Jesus commanded of going out into all nations and make disciples (Matthew 28:19, NIV). Another theme that was identified related to the role a Christian calling has in the need to learn a foreign language is spreading the Gospel. Answering the call and going to another country to make disciples it is necessary to spread the Gospel, and to do so effectively, Christian missionaries believed this

must be done in the native language of the people of the native land. Missionaries choose to serve in these challenging environments because of their calling (Cousineau et al., 2010; Price, 2013). This responsibility in sharing the Gospel created some challenges for Christian missionaries, particularly in second language acquisition.

Learning a foreign language alone without assistance and guidance from others is difficult. Verwer (2003) conveyed that many Christian missionaries leave the field due to difficulties in second language acquisition. Christian missionaries described this challenge as difficult. Oh and Meiring (2009) discovered that Christian missionaries have the realization of the difficulties in second language acquisition when living abroad. Not having the proper tools, or being aware of other indigenous languages or a lack of exposure to a variety of accents prior to arrival made it difficult for the co-researchers to navigate conversations and communicate effectively. Action International Ministries (2015) listed the need to learn one or more language fluently as one of the challenges for missionaries. Many of the co-researchers attempted to grasp social and linguistic concepts in the language to further comprehension but without assistance in these areas, it was difficult to do alone. Overcoming these difficulties is necessary to be effective missionaries (Oh & Meiring, 2009). The time necessary to learn the language was another challenge.

Second language acquisition like other types of learning does not occur quickly. Christian missionaries work on the field in a variety of capacities to build relationships with others in the native land. The time necessary to learn a foreign language is lacking because of their various responsibilities and duties. Literature has discussed several factors that contribute to second language acquisition such as contact time in the language and length of time necessary for language proficiency (Bataller, 2010; Dixon et al., 2012). Many of the co-researchers

conveyed that learning the heart language of the people should be the primary and sole focus for Christian missionaries until they have mastered the language. However, this was not the reality for many of the co-researchers who lacked the time necessary to learn. Many of the co-researchers related the lack of communication skills and inability to learn the foreign language created feelings of depression and isolation.

The desire to communicate with others was present but the sense of isolation in not being able to do so was present for Christian missionaries. Initially, without success in communication feelings of depression and a desire to avoid these interactions occurred. This established an environment of self-created isolation. Literature refers to the importance of engagement in the culture and community (Cadd, 2012; Kinginger, 2011). However, very little literature exists to describe the isolation of not being able to engage in the culture. Christian missionaries described the importance of relying on God, prayer, and other coping strategies to deal with these challenges.

Coping with the challenges of living immersed and struggles in second language acquisition were an essential part of the stories shared by the co-researchers. Christian missionaries shared the importance of relying on God for strength and guidance amidst the struggle as well as having a prayer support. This lifeline of support assisted them in persisting on the field. Sills (2008) related that feelings of stress and being overwhelmed can create a reliance on God.

Social and cultural interactions that were challenging were assisted with personal language learning and communication strategies as well as language learning assistance. Initially, many Christian missionaries reported utilizing hand gestures, drawing pictures, memorizing words, and translating phrases to aid in comprehension. Ultimately, many of the

co-researchers sought out individual language learning assistance in the form of conversational partners in the community or language tutors. These coping strategies assisted them in their daily interactions out in the community.

A difficulty in cultural adaptation is listed as one reason Christian missionaries leave the mission field (Verwer, 2003). The co-researchers expressed difficulties navigating cultural norms and learning appropriate cultural interactions. Cousineau et al. (2010) discussed the ability to adapt culturally as a predictor for success on the field. However, the co-researchers also expressed their abilities to adapt to the cultural as a coping strategy.

The two theories that guided this research were Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory and Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory. The social and cultural interactions encountered in second language acquisition require learners to rely on the native speakers around them to assist them in language development (Dixon et al., 2012; Willis Allen, 2010). Vygotsky's (1978) socio-cultural theory involves learners to engage culturally and socially with experts in the field to learn. Christian missionaries living immersed interact socially and culturally with native speakers on the field for second language development and acquisition.

Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory requires learners to be an observer and then model language in social contexts. Christian missionaries expressed many opportunities to learn by observation and modeling others in social interactions. Many co-researchers expressed the reward of these social interactions in gaining not only opportunities for relationship building but second language development and acquisition. All of these experiences and interactions have implications for not only Christian missionaries but also those that support them in their endeavors.

Implications

This study investigated the lived experiences of Christians who need to learn a foreign language in immersed settings via theoretical, empirical, and practical views. The finding of the research gives information that may be beneficial to Christian missionaries on the field, both currently and preparing, and those organizations that prepare and support Christian missionaries for service.

Christian Missionaries

Many experiences, challenges, and coping strategies that Christian missionaries experience in their need to learn a foreign language has been relayed in this study. The information regarding challenges and experiences would be helpful for missionaries as they prepare for the mission field. Gleaning from the voices of other veteran missionaries would also be helpful in living daily abroad. The information regarding depression, isolation, discouragement, and the importance of cultural and social interactions would be beneficial in reminding missionaries that these possible feelings, though difficult, are normal.

Applying coping strategies used by others that have proved beneficial to them in their experiences learning a foreign language living abroad can assist future missionaries as they prepare and are currently living abroad with the challenges of second language acquisition. Seeking God, cultivating a personal relationship with Him, and praying about challenges and struggles with language proficiency on the field are crucial for well-being. Other coping strategies mentioned would be beneficial for missionaries currently facing challenges in language development.

Christian missionaries may also benefit from the information regarding cultural adaptation. The co-researchers in this study regard the ability to adapt culturally as one of their

coping strategies. Thus, it is important for missionaries to recognize the difficulties of the role of cultural adaptation for not only success but also coping.

Mission Organizations

Mission organizations may benefit from this study by understanding the various aspects missionaries experience in second language acquisition. Being aware of the different aspects and struggles on field is important for cultivating a climate of support and ensuring that adequate preparation exists for future missionaries. The data regarding the experiences in second language acquisition difficulties would be helpful for mission organizations to understand and develop expectations accordingly. The time missionaries are given to devote to language learning and acquisition is often coupled with other responsibilities. The information collected reveals this challenge to be a hindrance in second language acquisition. This information would assist mission organizations in helping missionaries to be successful in their language learning endeavors.

The experiences and challenges that create a sense of frustration, discouragement, being overwhelmed, depression, and isolation are crucial for mission organizations to understand. This data would clarify the importance of creating a support network and perhaps mentoring system for missionaries with veteran missionaries to assist them in their emotional well-being as they face the challenges and struggles of second language acquisition. Lastly, the information regarding spiritual isolation would be valuable for mission organizations to understand that spiritually unfed and isolated missionaries are not going to be as successful as they could be. Thus, a spiritual community of support in this online digital world may help to serve this need and pour into missionaries in way that is currently lacking.

Christian Institutions of Higher Learning

Several times in the data, the co-researchers referenced a need to be better prepared. While this certainly is important to mission organizations, Christian institutions of higher learning that cultivate young adults committed to preparing themselves for the mission field would benefit from this data. The collected information on challenges and experiences in daily life may be of assistance to those in higher education preparing the next generation of missionaries. Data gathered on the difficulties in second language acquisition and the role Christian calling has in the need to learn a foreign language may be of use for those analyzing current and future foreign language requirements for future and current students pursuing degrees for work on the field.

Limitations

Limitations are factors that “the researcher has little or no control over” (Baron, 2008, p. 6). This qualitative study utilized participants that serve in various countries. Participation in this study was voluntary and the data was self-reported from the personal experiences of Christian missionaries. The nature of this limited the study. The varying ages, backgrounds, and places in the world all proved to be good for data collection however, there were regions where I would have like to have had participants but due to the nature of the country in which they were serving it was not considered safe to utilize a study about missionaries. This also limited the study and excluded the lived experiences of those Christian missionaries living in that part of the world.

Other limitations included the length of time living abroad, missionaries currently in language school, and those missionaries who serve and live abroad and need a foreign language to fulfill their calling to spread the Gospel but not to work in other non-traditional capacities.

These limitations narrowed the availability of participants. Another limitation included missionaries who wanted to participate in the study but due to the nature of life on field felt too overwhelmed to participate. This issue limited the available participants. Limitations with technology existed for some potential participants. Some willing and potential participants did not have reliable internet access or available technology to utilize for participations. This issue limited the study in which missionaries were able and could participate.

Lastly, limitations included personality differences and the way in which those differences may have influenced cultural and social engagement. Differences in personality could have affected how participants coped, engaged socially, and the experiences that they encountered.

Recommendations for Future Research

There are many opportunities for future research in this study. Christian missionaries serve in capacities all over the world to fulfill their Christian callings. The social and cultural interactions Christian missionaries experience on the field necessitates a need to learn a foreign language to fulfill their calling. The lived experiences of these missionaries will assist others in understanding this phenomenon. Regarding this study, several areas for future research could be examined and explored.

Many of the co-researchers expressed an ability to adapt culturally as a coping strategy. However, this is listed as a predictor for success for Christian missionaries in the literature (Cousineau et al., 2010). It is worthy of future exploration to investigate the cultural adaptation abilities of other Christian missionaries living abroad as well as how they experience the cultural specifically in order to adapt and embrace their new surroundings. Understanding this will further assist not only missionaries but also mission organizations as they prepare for the field.

Another area worthy of future exploration is personality. How do people with different personality types experience the culture, the need to learn a foreign language, engage in communication, and how they cope with fulfilling their callings? Researching personalities should be investigated to aid as many missionaries as possible and would assist differing types of Christian missionaries as they seek to fulfill their callings to serve and to spread the Gospel.

Many regions were not represented in this study due to the usage of the term missionary. Future research could explore Christian workers serving abroad to fulfill a calling so that security risks are not an issue and that the voices of those Christian workers can be heard and shared. The differing cultural perspectives would lend itself to future research and further exploration in regards to social and cultural interactions as well as cultural adaptability.

Lastly, further research could explore areas of support for Christian missionaries. The support systems that missionaries experience with other missionaries, sponsoring mission organizations, and fellow Christians may or may not assist second language acquisition and cultural understanding and should be explored further. Examining their support systems currently in place and possibilities for future support systems will assist in understanding the challenges of depression, isolation, discouragement, and a sense of being overwhelmed further. Understanding these experiences is imperative in cultivating Christian missionaries in success on the field.

Summary

This study was conducted to describe the lived experiences of Christian living in immersed settings who need to learn a foreign language to fulfill a Christian calling. The co-researchers' voices during data collection related their lived experiences that corroborated with previous research in many ways. One of the major themes Christian missionaries shared in their

experiences was the sense of frustration that occurred during second language acquisition. The desire to communicate in the heart language with native speakers and to share the Gospel contributed greatly to the overall need to learn a foreign language.

Despite the challenging and difficult experiences of second language acquisition, the lack of time to commit to language learning, and struggle with depression and isolation, Christian missionaries remained committed to language learning to fulfill their calling. Coping strategies of prayer and reliance on God supported missionaries in these struggles. These experiences are not easy ones, but worth enduring to fulfill the calling and serve others and Christ for eternal significance.

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APPENDIX A

IRB Approval Letter

LIBERTY UNIVERSITY

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

6/27/2016

Stephanie Blankenship

IRB Approval 2559.062716: The Lived Experiences of Christian Missionaries Who Need to Learn a Foreign Language to Fulfill a Call to Serve in Immersed Settings: A Phenomenological Study

Dear Stephanie Blankenship,

We are pleased to inform you that your study has been approved by the Liberty IRB. This approval is extended to you for one year from the date provided above with your protocol number. If data collection proceeds past one year, or if you make changes in the methodology as it pertains to human subjects, you must submit an appropriate update form to the IRB. The forms for these cases were attached to your approval email.

Thank you for your cooperation with the IRB, and we wish you well with your research project.

Sincerely,

G. Michele Baker, MA, CIP
Administrative Chair of Institutional Research
The Graduate School

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APPENDIX B

Recruitment Letter

Date:

Dear Prospective Participant:

As a graduate student in the School of Education at Liberty University, I am conducting research as part of the requirements for a Doctoral degree. I am conducting research to better understand a process or phenomenon. The purpose of my research is to describe the lived experiences of Christian missionaries who need to learn a foreign language to fulfill their Christian calling, and I am writing to invite you to participate in my study.

Participants must be traditional Christian missionaries living abroad from their native country and language for at least one month and up to two years. If you are an adult of 18 years of age or older and are willing to participate, you will be asked to complete an open-ended questionnaire, participate in an online discussion forum, and participate in an interview with the researcher. It should take approximately 3-5 hours total for you to complete the procedure[s] listed. Your participation will be completely confidential. A pseudonym will be given after informed consent and before the start of the research with the open-ended questionnaire. You will keep this pseudonym throughout the study.

To participate, open and complete the attached informed consent document. Once completed, please return the form to me by email. Once your signed consent document is received, a link will be emailed to you along with a pseudonym to begin the online questionnaire, which ends with an opportunity to schedule an interview.

An informed consent document is attached to this email, which should be read, reviewed, completed, and returned to me electronically. The consent document contains additional information about my research.

Sincerely,

Stephanie Blankenship

Liberty University, Assistant Professor of Spanish

sblankenship@liberty.edu

APPENDIX C

Consent Form

The Liberty University
Institutional Review Board has
approved this document for use
from 6/27/2016 to 6/26/2017
Protocol # 2559.062716

Informed Consent Form

The Lived Experiences of Christian Missionaries Who Need to Learn a Foreign Language to
Fulfill a Call to Serve in Immersed Settings: A Phenomenological Study

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You are invited to be in a research study that seeks to describe the lived experiences of Christian missionaries who need to learn a foreign language to fulfill a call to serve. You were selected as a possible participant because of your role as a Christian missionary in an immersed setting. I ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Stephanie L. Blankenship, a doctoral candidate in the School of Education at Liberty University, is conducting this study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to describe the experiences of Christians living in an immersed setting in a foreign country who need to learn a foreign language in order to fulfill a Christian calling. These experiences include cultural and social interactions that lead to language development in an immersed setting (Bataller, 2010; Stewart, 2010).

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, I would ask you to do the following things:

- 1.) Answer an open-ended questionnaire consisting of fifteen questions which will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.
- 2.) Participate in an online discussion board forum with other participants in this study using a given pseudonym over the course of one week. This will take approximately 1-2 hours over the week.

3.) Participate in an interview with the researcher that will take approximately 30-40 minutes. I will digitally record the interviews and transcribe them verbatim. A copy will be provided to you for verification purposes.

Risks and Benefits of being in the Study:

Minimal risks exist in this study, and these minimal risks are no more than would be encountered in everyday life.

There are no known direct benefits of participating in this study. However, the benefit to other Christian missionaries and organizations in understanding the lived experiences of Christians living immersed in non-native settings who need to learn a foreign language to fulfill a call to serve will be beneficial.

Compensation:

No one will be compensated for participating in this study.

Confidentiality:

The records of this study will be kept private. In any sort of report I might publish, I will not include any information that will make it possible to identify a subject. Research records will be stored securely and only the researcher will have access to the records. Your confidentiality will be maintained by the use of pseudonyms. Digital recordings and copies of data collected will be kept in a locked cabinet for the duration and a period of three years following the study. After this time, all data will either be shredded or erased.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this study is voluntary. Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Liberty University. If you decide to participate, you are free to not answer any question or withdraw at any time without affecting those relationships.

How to Withdraw from the Study:

If you choose to withdraw from the study, please contact the researcher at the email address included in the next paragraph. Should you choose to withdraw, data collected from you will be destroyed immediately and will not be included in this study.

The Liberty University Institutional Review Board has approved this document for use from 6/27/2016 to 6/26/2017 Protocol # 2559.062716

Contacts and Questions:

The researcher conducting this study is Stephanie Blankenship. You may ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, **you are encouraged** to contact her at sblankenship@liberty.edu. You may also contact the researcher's faculty advisor, Jennifer Rathmell, Ed.D., at jen@rathmell.com).

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this study and would like to talk to someone other than the researcher, **you are encouraged** to contact the Institutional Review Board, 1971 University Blvd, Carter 134, Lynchburg, VA 24515 or email at irb@liberty.edu.

Please notify the researcher if you would like a copy of this information to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent:

I have read and understood the above information. I have asked questions and have received answers. I consent to participate in the study.

The researcher has my permission to audio-record me as part of my participation in this study.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Signature of Investigator: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX D

Reflective Journal

<p><u>Date:</u> March 2016</p> <p><u>Activity Completed:</u> Research Proposal Development</p> <p><u>Personal Experiences and Possible Bias:</u> In my beginning thoughts about this study, I have considered my own thoughts and opinions. First, I acknowledge my opinion and thoughts that second language acquisition is difficult. As a Christian, I cannot imagine what I think to be a large immensity of a Christian calling to spread the gospel in non-native homelands and not know the language of the people spoken.</p> <p><u>Researcher Awareness:</u> I will continue to add my thoughts and set aside these acknowledged understandings/judgements throughout the study.</p>
<p><u>Date:</u> September 4, 2016</p> <p><u>Activity Completed:</u> Interview</p> <p><u>Personal Experiences and Possible Bias:</u> I am beginning this interview with the assumption that the Christian missionaries have answered a calling from God to serve and that they need to learn a foreign language to do so effectively. I also assume that they will report difficulties in SLA. I will have to ensure that I do not judge if they respond differently and that remain neutral in the delivery of the interview.</p> <p><u>Researcher Awareness:</u> I will have to ensure that I do not judge if they respond differently and that remain neutral in the delivery of the interview. I will also set aside my own personal experiences in SLA and merely report what I am told based on their lived experiences.</p>
<p><u>Date:</u> September 30, 2016</p> <p><u>Activity Completed:</u> Data Review and Analysis</p> <p><u>Personal Experiences and Possible Bias:</u> I have completed all of my data collection and am beginning to read and analyze all three forms of data. I will not force themes and ideas that I think should be in the data but relay the stories and experiences of the co-researchers.</p> <p><u>Researcher Awareness:</u> I will analyze each set of data as a standalone piece of data without comparing to my own experiences or that of the other co-researches to achieve what I think should be the result.</p>
<p><u>Date:</u> October 1, 2016</p> <p><u>Activity Completed:</u> Coding/Theming</p> <p><u>Personal Experiences and Possible Bias:</u> I have read and analyzed all forms of data collection and have begun to assign codes to the themes that are arising. I will continue to make sure that I do not force themes in this process.</p> <p><u>Researcher Awareness:</u> I will utilize the themes and code appropriately, collecting the occurrence of a particular code within the data for all three sets collected.</p>

APPENDIX E**Open-Ended Questionnaire**

1. Name _____
2. Age _____
3. Gender _____
4. Ethnicity _____
5. Years of Missionary service _____
6. Years of Missionary service abroad _____
7. Current country serving in mission _____
8. Number of previous missions abroad _____
9. Please describe your daily experiences in learning a foreign language while living abroad immersed.
10. Please describe your calling into the ministry abroad.
11. Please describe your experiences in needing to learn this foreign language to fulfill your calling.
12. Please describe how you have coped in your learning a foreign language to fulfill your calling.
13. Please describe your challenges in living abroad culturally.
14. Please describe your challenges in living abroad learning a foreign language.
15. Please describe your challenges in fulfilling your call to serve.

APPENDIX F

Online Discussion Forum Prompts

1. Please post an introductory post using your assigned pseudonym to introduce yourself to the online forum group. Please describe your calling to missions and your call to your specific area abroad. Please provide any additional information you would find important regarding your placement and answering God's calling.
2. What experiences are you encountering or have you encountered in your need to learn a foreign language in order to fulfill a Christian calling?
3. What role does your calling have in your foreign language learning?
4. What challenges have you experienced in the need to learn a foreign language?
5. What coping strategies do you experience in the need to learn a foreign language?

APPENDIX G

Semi-Structured Interview Questions

1. What are your experiences living in an immersed setting in a foreign country?
2. What are your experiences in being called by God to serve?
3. What are your experiences learning a foreign language to fulfill your Christian calling?
4. What role does your calling play in your learning a foreign language culturally?
5. What role does your calling play in your learning a foreign language for communication?
6. What challenges do you experience in the need to learn a foreign language?
7. What coping strategies do you experience in the need to learn a foreign language?
8. What advice would you give to a new missionary in what to expect in their experiences living abroad in learning a foreign language to fulfill their calling?

APPENDIX H

Enumeration Table

Codes	Enumeration of Code across data sets	Theme
Explain in Heart language	8	Heart Language Communication
Communicate in Heart Language	29	Heart Language Communication
Heart language importance	16	Heart Language Communication
Speak effectively about Christ	18	Need to Spread the Gospel
Share in language about God	15	Need to Spread the Gospel
No time to learn	18	Time necessary to Learn
Lack of time	12	Time necessary to Learn
Time takes to understand	5	Time necessary to Learn
Accents Difficult	12	SLA is Difficult
Speak fast in understanding	14	SLA is Difficult
Can't understand	28	SLA is Difficult
Miscommunication	20	Sense of Frustration
Not being understood	15	Sense of Frustration
Unsuccessful Language Attempts	18	Sense of Frustration
Perfectionism	6	Sense of Frustration
Cultural interactions rewarding	20	Rewards & Humility of Cultural & Social Interactions
Humbling/Humility	15	Rewards & Humility of Cultural & Social Interactions
Stressful	20	Sense of Frustration
Hardship/Discouraged	19	Sense of Frustration
Lonely	13	Depression & Isolation
Depressed	7	Depression & Isolation
Prayer Support	27	Prayer & Reliance on God
Talk to God	47	Prayer & Reliance on God
Cultural Immersion	22	Cultural Adaptation
Flexibility	18	Cultural Adaptation
Language help	41	Language Learning Assistance & Strategies
Language strategy	30	Language Learning Assistance & Strategies

APPENDIX I**Audit Trail**

Date	Activities Completed
June 27, 2016	Received IRB Approval
June 29, 2016	Sent Recruitment Letters to Potential Participants
July 6, 2016	Conducted Pilot Study
July 8, 2016	Complete Analysis of Pilot Study
July 10-30, 2016	Collected IRB Informed Consent Letters from Participants
July 30-September 1, 2016	Collected Open-ended Questionnaires
September 4-24, 2016	Individual Interviews with each participant completed via SKYPE and telephone
September 30, 2016	All Discussion Board Questions and Responses Collected
September 24-29, 2016	Transcribed Interviews
	Member checking completed after interviews transcribed
September 30- October 7, 2016	Data Collection completed, all responses collected, and interviews transcribed. Begin coding and identifying themes.
October 7-14, 2016	Write Chapter Four
October 14-16, 2016	Write Chapter Five, submit draft to Dr. Rathmell for review