

Study Abroad Promotional Tactics for Students in Critical Language Host Countries

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1 Background

313,415 U.S. tertiary students participated in a study abroad program in 2014/2015. Many students study languages abroad through study abroad program providers.

Studying critical languages is increasingly promoted as a way to strengthen U.S. national security (U.S. Department of Education, 2008), yet participation in study abroad programs in critical language-speaking countries is low (IIE, 2016).

Focusing on the critical languages of **Arabic, Russian, and Chinese**, how do program providers attract participation to their study abroad programs?

Привет! 你好! مرحبا!

2 Methods

Mixed-methods approach utilized to determine:

- How program providers target potential applicants
- What outreach tactics providers employ to promote participation in critical language-speaking host countries



Data collected between February and April 2017

Potential Sample: 60 programs (20 in each language)

Theoretical Framework & Hypothesis: Student Choice Theory (Salisbury et al, 2009)

College students make decisions based on human & cultural capital considerations. Providers mirror student considerations in their outreach.

3 Results

Survey Respondents: 18

Website Reviews: 15

Phone Interviews: 5

When **Targeting a Student Audience**, providers tend to rely on academic achievement and background in critical language. Phone interviews revealed this student type is targeted as students studying critical languages self-select.

For **Outreach Tactics**, providers tend to utilize distance outreach (phone, email, voice-over-internet) and impersonal outreach (listservs, listings, social media) the most for connecting with potential students. While face-to-face outreach (study abroad fairs, in-person meetings, tabling events) is important, these are often less possible for international organizations and those with small marketing teams.

Language(s)	Number of Survey Respondents	Number of Phone Interviewees
Arabic (only)	5	3
Chinese (only)	0	0
Russian (only)	3	1
Arabic & Chinese	5	0
Arabic & Russian	1	0
Chinese & Russian	2	1
Arabic, Chinese, & Russian	2	0

4 Conclusion

Quantitative and qualitative data falls in three themes:

- Academic and Linguistic Achievement
- Students are Self-Selecting
- Challenges in the Field

Limitations:

- Author previously employed by study abroad provider
- Anonymity of survey respondents, inability to fully correlate data streams

Long term: Determining the student audience most interested in critical language programming and what outreach tactics promote study abroad can help increase the number learning critical languages, a U.S. national security need.

5 References

Full list of references for thesis available upon request.

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