

Preparing to study or travel abroad: The Travel Abroad Motivation Equation (TAME)

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ABSTRACT

Many thousands of students study and travel abroad every year, many with the explicit aim of learning or improving at a foreign language. While their motivation to increase their foreign language skills may initially be strong, various factors during travel could potentially influence this motivation. Research conducted with a Japanese bilingual bicultural adolescent (12;6) who experienced a short-term return trip to the U.S., her first return to a predominantly English-speaking environment in seven years, revealed her to have been further motivated to learn and practice English because of the trip, even though her motivation dropped during her travel abroad, as her English deficiencies were illuminated and she developed an altered and somewhat negative “perception of self.” By extrapolating from the girl’s case, the authors propose that what the girl experienced can be explained via an equation that factors in trip expectations, identity, language ability, and reflections on travel abroad and learning experiences. By means of this equation, it is asserted that study abroad participants, as well as those who travel abroad and have the need to engage in foreign or second language use, will be better prepared for possible fluctuation in their language learning motivation, as motivation to learn or use another language during such travel is ultimately influenced by a complex blend of such expectations, experiences, and reflections.

Keywords: study abroad, travel abroad, language learning motivation, second language learning, foreign language learning

INTRODUCTION

When the topics of travel abroad and foreign or second language learning and usage converge, many turn to the literature on study abroad (SA). Foreign language professionals see SA, which allow participants to engage in language learning and other activities while in the target language and culture for a limited pre-determined amount of time, as indispensable when it comes to the process of learning a foreign language (Allen, 2010), and they often site SA as being a life-transforming event for them (Kinging, 2008, as cited in Allen, 2010). Indeed, the authors of the present paper can personally vouch for the impact such learning experiences have had on their lives.

As positive as the literature tends to be with regard to the influence SA has on participants' language development and the broadening of their world views, the terms "short-term travel" or "brief trip abroad" are almost exclusively the domain of discussions about SA, that is, short trips taken through structured programs (ranging in length from between a few weeks to several months), organized by institutions, by which participants can typically receive course credit. What the literature generally lacks are inspections of brief non-institutional-supported trips abroad by second or foreign language users, such as vacations or business trips, where language learning may not necessarily be the motive for the trip yet where the target language – its use and its impact on those involved in the trip – is nevertheless of central importance. These types of short-term trips abroad (hereafter, STTA) can still provide much to these sojourners as well as to those interested in the ways in which travel abroad to different linguistic and cultural locales influence them as individuals, for they can offer travelers native speaker contact, thereby promoting cross-cultural relationships and providing opportunities for linguistic and cultural development within the target community (Castañeda & Zirger, 2011). Additionally, such trips can have a profound impact on the travelers' identities, not only in terms of their being language users but also in terms of their being world citizens.

The current paper details continued data analyses on research conducted with a Japanese bilingual bicultural adolescent (12;6) who experienced a STTA to the U.S., her first return to a predominantly English-speaking environment in seven years. Although the original and subsequent research with the girl meant to explore how re-exposure to the language of a previously experienced foreign country impacted her identity as an occasional English user and learner who was part American and who had spent her linguistically formative years in the U.S. (authors, 2012a) and how location influenced her identity (authors, 2013), respectively, it was discovered that the girl claimed the trip to have increased her English language learning motivation. This declaration came somewhat unexpectedly, given the fact that the girl was excited about the trip yet clearly felt deficient in the language upon her arrival in the U.S. However, given the opportunity to reflect on and internalize the experiences she had on the trip after her return to Japan, she was able to incorporate those experiences into her identity, thereby becoming more determined to remedy her English language deficiencies.

The aim of this paper is to present the girl's case and show that her expectations (e) plus her abilities and deficiencies (a + d) in the language while on the trip, coupled with the opportunity for reflection (r) on what the trip meant to her in terms of her language use and her identity, all combined to affect (and in her case, consequently enhance) her motivation (m) to learn English and improve her English skills, all of which can be expressed in the equation $m = e + (a + d) + r$, which is termed here as the Travel Abroad Motivation Equation, or TAME. Given that travelers engaged in either SA or STTA likely (a) have expectations for second or foreign

language use while abroad, (b) display a certain amount of ability and deficiency with respect to said language use, (c) reflect upon their language use experiences while abroad but also do so more intently after their return home, and (d) subsequently have their motivation to learn or continue to use said language influenced in some way because of their travel experiences, it is asserted that the equation is applicable and of benefit to most such travelers. By being made aware of the equation, SA program participants and STTA travelers will be better equipped to make sense of how their travel abroad experiences may influence their identity and potentially induce fluctuations in their language learning motivation.

THE LITERATURE

Study abroad

While the topic of the current study, which involves a STTA, overlaps to some degree with the broader and far more common literature of SA (and to a lesser extent migrant studies), the main goals of SA are, arguably, to provide participants with language learning opportunities and to increase and broaden their cultural understanding, with multiple tertiary goals stressed to greater or lesser degrees, which include to make friends with local people, to engage in local customs, to partake in unique culinary experiences, and to go sightseeing, among others. With regard to the girl in the present study, the purpose of the trip described here had neither of these main goals as explicit primary foci, as she essentially accompanied her family on the STTA (see below) and was interested in again experiencing and using English – the language she proclaimed to be her first and true language – in a predominantly English-speaking environment, over and above traveling abroad for English learning purposes. Thus, while her trip shared several common points with SA, based on what is described in the SA literature, there remained clear differences, which make the SA literature only partially relevant when examining and situating the current context.

Nevertheless, what both SA and the STTA to be discussed here share are their many positive influences, particularly those of language learning when travelers spend time in a country not their own (Freed, 1995), as well as those related to identity (see below). Regarding the first point, generally speaking, SA provides benefits to those wishing to improve their second or foreign language skills, though some conflicting evidence (Freed, 1995) and doubt about the ability of short-term SA to provide significant linguistic gains (see Davidson, 2007; Freed, 1990) exist, especially considering that variation in individual gains and performance must be accounted for (Stewart, 2010). Additionally, both SA and STTA offer societal immersion, which has been noted to be of exceptional importance in fostering not only the development of a second or foreign language but also positive attitudes toward multiple languages and cultures (Caldas, 2006).

Another overlap of SA and STTA is the limited duration of stay in the target culture. SA trips vary greatly in length, with the shorter ones spanning only a few weeks, such as those implemented in January-term programs. Although short, such stays abroad have been found to still be valuable to learners, as they allow them to improve their linguistic skills and decrease their language anxiety (Allen & Herron, 2003, as cited in Castañeda & Zirger, 2011). They also provide the advantages of affordability, flexibility with regard to participants' planned graduation dates at their home institutions, and a time frame brief enough to allow those apprehensive about spending time abroad to view learning overseas as both safe and reasonable (Lewis &

Niesenbaum, 2005, as cited in Pitts, 2009). The trade-offs, however, include less depth of and fewer opportunities for cultural immersion and intercultural growth (Pitts, 2009). Dwyer (2004) even cautions that although benefits can be had by SA participants in such brief programs, they must be well designed, implemented carefully, and run for at least six weeks, as it remains unclear as to what benefits participants may gain via stays shorter than that.

Identity

Over the past two decades, interest in identity and how it relates to second and foreign language learners and users has increased dramatically. Beginning with the seminal work of such researchers as Bonny Norton Peirce (Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000) and McKay and Wong (1996), research into language learner identity presents indications that identity should be viewed as a dynamic rather than static concept. Norton (2000) asserts that identity includes the ways in which individuals understand their relationship with the world across time as well as space. More importantly (and more germane to the present paper), the identity of a second language user is tied fundamentally to that learner's resultant future possibilities. Language's role with regard to these future possibilities becomes central, for language is intimately connected to identity (Norton, 2000; Norton & Toohey, 2002; Ochs, 1993) and plays a large part in influencing identity formation (Tse, 1996). Identities form and become contextualized via language (Greer, Kamada, Ascough, & Jie, 2005). Language also acts as the medium by which individuals can gain or lose contact with those who can create, support, bolster, or otherwise shape their identity (Peirce, 1995).

More recently, in addition to addressing the topic of language, researchers have begun to examine identity by including other factors such as location. Burck (2011) found that those who live in multiple languages experience and construct the self differently, depending on the language being used. Additionally, movement across geographical and psychological borders and subsequent immersion in new (i.e., different) sociocultural (and possibly linguistic) environments has been found to potentially destabilize an individual's sense of identity, which can then cause the person to then strive to make sense of who he or she is so that some sense of internal balance may be reached (Block, 2007b).

Although the current worldwide economic downturn has almost certainly influenced students' decisions (and means) to study in other countries, a look at trends involving study abroad participants to and from the U.S. provides some perspective on the number of people moving across borders, at least in educational realms. During the 1996-97 academic school year, U.S. students studying abroad numbered roughly 100,000 ("Study Abroad Statistics 2008," 2008). By the 2009-10 academic school year, that number had risen to 260,000 (Bhandari & Chow, 2010). International students who traveled to American universities saw a similar dramatic increase, from nearly 458,000 in the 1996-97 academic school year to over 690,000 participants by 2010 ("America's Two 'Brain Drains'," 2011). The numbers for people visiting other countries for other purposes (e.g., business, vacation, immigration) are without a doubt much higher. As edifying as these figures are, what travel abroad means – and how that travel impacts traveler identity – remains an area largely unexplored. SA researchers have not, for the most part, "delved into the actual experiences, perceptions, and transformations of individual L2 (second language) sojourners" (Jackson, 2008, p. 9).

The L2 Motivational Self System

In arguing for the inclusion of inspections of learner identity within a framework of language learning motivation, Dörnyei, one of the lead figures researching such motivation, developed his L2 Motivational Self System (hereafter, L2MSS) in 2005. The L2MSS sits atop the latest paradigm explaining language learning motivation, as it blends advances in mainstream psychology with aspects from previous L2 research. It contains, in short, the following three components:

1. Ideal L2 Self, which is the learner's ideal self with respect to the person the learner wishes to become as a speaker of the L2.
2. Ought-to L2 Self, which concerns the attributes the learner believes should be possessed to meet expectations and avoid possible negative outcomes.
3. L2 Learning Experience, which involves aspects of the immediate learning environment.

The first component explains that the learner has an imagined possible or future self in mind that they desire to become by learning the target language. Motivation stems from the learner making efforts to narrow the gap between his or her current non-proficient self and the imagined proficient possible future self. The second component covers the existence of various attributes that the learner desires to possess, such as responsibilities or obligations, so that he or she may avoid possible negative or undesirable outcomes or results. The third component concerns situation-specific motives as well as reactions to the immediate learning environment and experience. These motives and reactions can include perceptions of teacher and curriculum effectiveness, perceived friendliness of peers or target language speakers, and views of personal success with target language use. These three components are meant to span the motivating factors a learner encounters or engages in when learning a language. Researchers have empirically assessed and tested the model (e.g., Al-Shehri, 2009; Csizér & Kormos, 2009; Ryan, 2009; Taguchi, Magid, & Papi, 2009), and it has been successfully applied to qualitative research meant to explore and explain a learner's motivation and identity (authors, 2012b).

The L2 Learning Experience component

When looking at this latter model verification attempt, which was conducted by the authors of the present paper, the L2MSS was found to be somewhat restrictive, particularly in its description of the L2 Learning Experience component. This is because, according to the model, this component “concerns situation-specific motives related to the immediate learning environment and experience” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 106) as well as any impact from the teacher, the curriculum, peers, and feelings of success (Dörnyei, 2009). Dörnyei himself confesses that even though this component is essential, little has been discussed regarding it, and indeed, analyses of this causal dimension of the model have yet to be conducted. Saying little more than that this component refers to “positive learning experiences” (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2011, p. 86) raised questions regarding what such “positive learning experiences” actually entail. The authors thus set out to determine what could be positive (or, as was speculated, initially detrimental but ultimately beneficial) to learners. The data gained from the research with the Japanese bilingual bicultural girl was once again analyzed. Results (see authors, forthcoming) indicated that what was “negative” about the trip actually became positive – motivationally speaking – for the girl,

although certain provisions apply (see below). These results become key to the construction of the Travel Abroad Motivation Equation (TAME), the topic of the current paper.

THE RESEARCH

Before discussing the application of these results, background information about the research with the girl must be given. Fuller explanations about the original research (i.e., impetus, participant, methodology) are published elsewhere (i.e., in authors, 2012a), as are the findings of the original and subsequent data analyses (i.e., authors, 2012b; authors, 2013; authors, forthcoming). Due to space limitations, background information and previous findings will be relayed only in brief here.

Impetus

The authors and their two half-Japanese half-American children took a nine-day trip to Hawaii, as the authors were scheduled to present papers at an academic conference there. Because the trip would see their daughter, Leia (a pseudonym), leave Japan and return to a predominantly English environment (i.e., be exposed to English from native speakers and her American relatives who would join the family in Hawaii), it was thought to be an excellent opportunity to see how the trip influenced her identity as a bilingual bicultural.

Participant

Leia (12;6) lived in Japan but spent her linguistically formative years (from 1;2 to 5;6) in the U.S. where she experienced simultaneous bilingual acquisition (Montrul, 2008), as she spoke both languages at home and at various schools. When she returned to Japan at age five, her dominant language of English subsequently underwent attrition, as she was enrolled in the Japanese public school system and used Japanese daily.

Procedure

Because the initial research objective was to reveal and scrutinize Leia's identity in terms of how she viewed English as a part of her sense of self as a bilingual bicultural living in Japan and how the trip would make such views come into greater focus for her, the authors concluded that Hammersley and Atkinson's (2007) three dimensions of time, people, and context were essential to consider. Thus, multiple semi-structured interviews (before, during, and after the trip) were decided upon as the most appropriate data collection method. Such interviews allowed (a) Leia to express her thoughts and feelings about returning to the U.S. and to the English language spoken there, (b) her to become familiar and comfortable with interviews as the data collection method, and (c) for the gathering of data that quantitative measurement instruments could not provide. Specifically, as Pavlenko (2001, cited in Block, 2007a) states, understanding the stories and experience of language learners in their own words presents "unique and rich sources of information about the relationship between language and identity in second language learning... It is possible that only personal narratives provide a glimpse into areas so private, personal, and intimate that they are rarely – if ever – breached in the study of SLA (second language acquisition)" (p. 167).

Four interviews were conducted prior to the trip. These interviews were used to have Leia recall her time living in the U.S. and her return to Japan, as well as to explore how she used English and Japanese and what she expected regarding the trip. Three interviews were conducted during the trip, with three more conducted after returning to Japan. These interviews explored her sense of self and her connection to English and English use while in Hawaii. The tenth and last interview was largely used for data verification.

Leia was informed of all aspects of the research, and she gave her full consent to research participation. Her mother interviewed her in Japanese, as it was Leia's stronger language, it was her daily language, and she had more daily contact with her mother. Furthermore, as a native Japanese, her mother could pick up meaning embedded in Japanese communicative contexts that make use of periods of silence and non-verbal cues to convey meaning (Barnlund, 1989; Lewis, 1996; Thompson, 1987).

Leia's American father, who is fluent in Japanese, undertook the task of data analysis. He translated the interviews into English in order to get closer to the data and to be able to build a case, based on Leia's utterances, for whatever the data revealed. The translations were first coded and then reduced to major themes. Leia's mother was then given these themes so that they could be inspected, verified, and discussed.

Results

The initial set of data analyses revealed three findings. First, Leia possessed three "voices" (i.e., a Japanese voice, a public English speaking voice, and a private English speaking voice). Each voice was used in unique situations, and each made her feel differently. Second, Leia considered herself to have a degree of "tension" (a Japanese term taken from English which translates roughly to "outgoingness" or "extrovertedness") that was neither fully American nor Japanese. This caused her to conclude that she would never be fully American, even though she thought of English as her first and true language. Third, across the study, Leia consistently identified herself as being 70% American and 30% Japanese, even though while in Hawaii she felt more like a Japanese. This last finding led the researchers to make a distinction between "identity" and "perception of self," where the former is a larger more stable concept and the latter is a more transient and proximate form of identity that is influenced by a person's immediate surroundings and "in the moment" experiences.

The results most central to the present discussion concern Leia's motivation regarding English use, which are expounded upon at length elsewhere (see authors, forthcoming). The pre-trip interviews revealed her to be highly motivated to return to a mainly English language environment. Her desires to use the trip to improve her English were clear, as can be seen in this excerpt from the third interview.

- 3.397. Mother: You want to use English in Hawaii?
3.398. Leia: Yes.
3.399. M: It's a good chance (to improve)?
3.400. L: Yes, it is!

The fact that she would have to use English with her monolingual American relatives was exciting to her, as she would, by necessity, return to using English.

On the whole, the trip was a mixture of positive and negative, of success and failure

for her. For instance, on the positive side, not only did she enjoy doing activities like going shopping and swimming with her American relatives, but linguistically, she was able to communicate with others in English (e.g., her relatives, waiters, store clerks) and be understood. She was able to do things on her own by using the language, and it was clear that this was a confidence booster for her, as it validated to her and others that she too was an American (i.e., a competent speaker of English).

However, her enthusiasm to once again use English in a natural setting was tempered by several factors. First, she realized that she was not as proficient in English as she thought was or as she remembered she was when younger, living in the U.S. For example, in the fifth interview, the first interview conducted in Hawaii:

5.247. M: You get frustrated?

5.248. L: Yes.

5.249. M: Because you can't say what you want to say?

5.250. L: Yes. In my head the letters are all lined up, but I can't get the words out.

During the sixth interview, she remarked that she realized she was using more Japanese than she wanted or expected to. Increased Japanese use meant reduced English practice and fewer opportunities to improve her English, which is what she had hoped to do.

6.053. M: So compared to the beginning, you think that you have not improved as much as you thought you would?

6.054. L: Not as much as I thought, but I still speak.

Second, her avoidance of English was found to stem partly from her embarrassment about using English. More specifically, she was afraid to be corrected by her parents should she use incorrect English.

8.045. M: If we weren't there, you would have talked more?

8.046. L: Yes.

8.047. M: So when we are there, why would that be embarrassing?

8.048. L: If I make a mistake, you would tell me.

8.049. M: You would be told when you made a mistake?

8.050. L: Yes.

8.051. M: So, if we weren't there, you wouldn't be embarrassed if you made a mistake?

8.052. L: Yes.

Third, the location itself (i.e., Hawaii) made her feel less American, that is, less like a native speaker of English. With many signs written in Japanese and the abundance of visiting Japanese, she could not help but feel like just another transient Japanese tourist (see authors, 2013), which made her more aware of her Japanese identity and of her underdeveloped English language skills. As mentioned previously, travel and subsequent submersion into new or different sociocultural and linguistic environments have the potential to destabilize a person's sense of identity (Block, 2007b). Leia's move into this unexpected environment caught her somewhat off guard, as she pictured a return to the U.S. and an English-speaking environment, not a Japanese-speaking one.

Jackson (2008) discusses language, culture, and identity in SA contexts, centering on the experiences of L2 sojourners who move from one culture to another, or more specifically, when they move from being members of an ethnic majority to becoming “visibly different members of an ethnic minority” (p. 31). Leia was not visibly different from white tourists or “locals” (the term used in Hawaii to delineate people, often whites, who live and work in Hawaii but who are not of Hawaiian descent), as was evinced when she ordered a pizza on her own at a mall food court but was asked for her order in English, not in Japanese, as the other (Japanese) patrons in line were. Yet, it was the presence of the visibly different Japanese tourists that was in essence the catalyst for her to feel more Japanese and less American.

Upon returning to Japan, Leia expressed her clear disappointment that she had lost motivation to improve her English while in Hawaii and that she regretted not trying harder to speak in English.

- 8.033. M: Was there anything you could have done more?
8.034. L: I think I should have tried to speak more.
8.035. M: To Mom-Mom and them?
8.036. L: Yes.
8.037. M: Asking more questions?
8.038. L: Yes.

Judging by the confluence of the three factors just mentioned and previous research results indicating that her “perception of self” abroad caused her to actually feel more Japanese than American (against her desires and expectations), one would suspect that her motivation to learn and improve at English would have decreased dramatically after the trip. However, post-trip interviews revealed her motivation to have actually increased, in her own words, tenfold.

- 9.201. M: Going to Hawaii... motivation to study English... you said you had motivation from long ago. . .
9.202. L: Yes.
9.203. M: . . . So going this time to Hawaii, do you have more motivation?
9.204. L: Yes. An incredible amount.
9.205. M: An incredible amount.
9.206. L: Yes.
9.207. M: About how much more than from before?
9.208. L: About ten times more.
9.209. M: Ten?
9.210. L: Yes.

Although initially dejected because of her perceived language deficiencies, post-trip interviews revealed her recalling and thinking about her trip, which ultimately led her to emerge with a newly discovered motivation to improve at English. The authors therefore concluded (forthcoming) that it was time and conscious reflection on her experiences, desires, and feelings during that trip that led to her post-trip increase in motivation, as it was only after the trip that she realized that she required more time and effort to build up her English skills. Thus, the “negative” aspects of the trip that she encountered, which included examples of her deficiency in

English and feelings of embarrassment, eventually served her in a positive way. What she needed was time after the trip to make sense of not only how she performed in English during the trip, but also to make sense of who she is as a person and how and to what degree she wishes to deal with English and English language study.

APPLICATION

With these research results and conclusions established, what the authors now propose is an application of the findings, that is, determining how the findings may be put to use or otherwise set as an example, particularly in teaching or education-related spheres. Although the findings of the research with Leia cannot readily be generalized to larger populations, the researchers nevertheless noticed a potential application avenue involving motivation, language learning, and travel, be it in SA or STTA situations. Considering that Leia experienced fluctuation in her motivation, evinced from checks across the three sets of interviews, it was thought appropriate to examine the elements that stimulated this fluctuation, especially the eventual monumental rise in motivation once she had returned to Japan.

It was seen that Leia's motivation to learn English increased tenfold by the ninth interview, which was conducted almost one month after she had returned to Japan. The question to be asked, then, was this: why did her motivation increase after the trip, especially considering the many negatives she encountered? As explained elsewhere (see authors, forthcoming), the "negative" aspects of the trip (e.g., her awareness of her deficiencies in English, her feeling embarrassed to use English in front of her parents) were in fact "positive" learning experiences, though they were not perceived as such at the time they were experienced, when Leia was "in the moment" experiencing them. Leia only realized their positive nature once she had returned to Japan and contemplated her experiences.

Thus, examining Leia's case revealed that her resultant motivation could potentially be explained by the following equation, which the researchers call the Travel Abroad Motivation Equation, or TAME:

$$m = e + (a + d) + r$$

In TAME:

- m = resultant motivation to improve at a second or foreign language. In other words, this means L2 motivation, but it explicitly refers to motivation developed at a point in time after the trip has concluded, when all of the factors involved have been accounted for.
- e = expectations for the trip. These expectations are experienced before travel. They include expectations for things like L2 improvement and cultural immersion.
- a = ability in the language under study or immersed in when abroad. Ability must be demonstrated in some manner by the L2 user to the L2 user him/herself.
- d = deficiency in the language under study or immersed in when abroad. Deficiency must be demonstrated in some manner by the L2 user to the L2 user him/herself.
- r = reflection on trip experiences, particularly L2 use. Reflection, which is arguably the key component of the equation, can of course occur during the trip, but the more important reflection occurs after the fact, as sufficient time is needed for this reflection to occur.

An explanation of TAME requires a return once again to the case of Leia. First, her resultant high motivation was partly the product of her high and positive expectations for the trip, which was established in the pre-trip interviews. Allen's (2010) SA research with students of French at the college level found that the two primary orientations motivating language students were linguistic motives and career-oriented motives. Leia's orientation for her STTA was composed of heavy portions of both motives. While she remarked repeatedly that she was looking forward to once again meeting with her American relatives and using English on the trip (which was, after all, her "true" voice), she had mentioned from the first interview that it was her desire to one day work in the animation division of the Dreamworks motion picture company. In order to work for that company, she knew that she would have to improve her English abilities. Viewing her situation through TAME, expectations (e) were definitely in a positive range, as she had so many things to look forward to, the most important of which was English language improvement.

However, her positive expectations were not fully met. Indeed, not only did she encounter a level of difficulty with English during the trip, but also, she experienced a degree of shock regarding this part of the U.S. (see below). Not having her expectations met resulted, in part, in a decrease in L2 motivation and a shift in "perception of self."

Pitts (2009) notes that when SA participants are faced with an expectation gap when abroad, they are forced to deal with a range of unanticipated and, in many cases, undecipherable outcomes. In Leia's case, she realized that although she is part American and she stood on American soil, her physical presence there did not necessarily transfer with it the feeling of being American. Because of the high number of Japanese tourists, she unexpectedly felt more Japanese than American while in Hawaii. Over the course of the trip, she gradually came to associate and identify herself with these Japanese, many of whom were tourists (as, essentially, she was as well). While her expectations led her to believe that she would more or less be surrounded by Americans (i.e., native English speakers) while in Hawaii, the reality was something a different.

Second, as was explained briefly above and in more depth in authors (forthcoming), Leia encountered a mixture of successes and failures with regard to her English language use during the trip. In TAME, these successes and failures are indicated by her ability (a) and her deficiency (d) in the language. Although she did experience a number of successes, her deficiencies, which include her realizing she did not know how to say certain things in English as well as her embarrassment to use English in front of her parents, were found to outweigh her abilities, as evinced from her using less and less English as the trip progressed and her later regrets at not using as much English as she expected she would. In TAME, as linguistic ability and deficiency are two sides of the same coin, they are placed together, that is, as (a + d). When examining Leia's language experiences, it was concluded that her display of language use was firmly seated in a negative range.

With only these factors in TAME, that is, $m = e + (a + d)$, one could conclude that there would be little reason for Leia to have much if any motivation to stretch her English abilities as a result of the trip. Her high expectations for the trip were only partly realized, as her language deficiencies came as a shock to her, thereby causing a shift in her "perception of self" away from American and toward Japanese (as explained in authors, 2012a). The result of this was her gradual shying away from using English during the trip. As Leia was ultimately found to possess a greatly increased level of motivation to learn English as a result of the trip, the reason for the inclusion of the final and key piece of the equation, reflection (r), should be clear.

As mentioned, Leia claimed to have ten times the motivation to learn English after the

trip than before, this in spite of the fact that she exposed her deficiencies in the language, which disheartened her and led to a non-American – and non-English speaking – “perception of self.” The reason her motivation ultimately increased was that she had post-trip time for reflection on her trip experiences. Sussman (2000) notes that identity shifts that occur as a result of travel to a host country and immersion in the host culture come as a consequence of behavioral and social adaptations that must be made in the host environment. These adaptations, however, only become fully salient upon return to the home country.

In Leia’s case, her post-trip reflection allowed her to take stock not only of her own abilities in English and assess what Dörnyei would consider to be her current L2 self, but it also exposed to her what she needed to do to expand her abilities in the language, as she was able to grasp what her ideal L2 self should be. Of course, in some cases, this reflection could cause the calculation of TAME to come out negative, as a learner might conclude that the gap between the current L2 self and the ideal L2 self is just too wide to bridge. However, for Leia, her negative experiences on the trip (i.e., the exposure of her language deficiencies and the shift of her “perception of self” away from American) were laid bare for her to see. Thus, as stated elsewhere, “they (i.e., her language deficiencies) were eventually to become the galvanizing components to her language learning motivation, thereby causing her to remark in the post-trip interviews that she wished to study more and, with certainty, improve” (authors, forthcoming).

DISCUSSION

It was the intent of the authors to show in the present paper that Leia’s experiences on her STTA involved numerous factors that influenced her eventual – but not immediate – increase in motivation to learn English. Built upon Dörnyei’s L2MSS and a series of analyses of data provided from research with her, the results discussed here show that an equation, TAME, succinctly illustrate these factors. It is now asserted that people engaged in SA or STTA, particularly those concerned with language use or study, could benefit from being made aware of this equation, as both L2 motivation and the “perception of self” of learners have been found to be quite dynamic, not static.

The researchers grant that the proffered equation is somewhat simplistic. However, analyses of Leia’s experiences point to precisely these elements within TAME. It must also be stressed that with these elements come undercurrents of learner identity, “perception of self,” and of course notions of Dörnyei’s current and ideal L2 selves. Any application of TAME must, by necessity, have these identity components accounted for.

What must also be recognized is that in TAME, there is the underlying notion that travel abroad experiences are comprised of events, experiences, and thoughts that occur before, during, and after the trip, and that all three time periods interweave in a manner that influences motivation. As stated, the key to the equation lies in the after-the-fact reflection, as this reflection allows the learner to make sense of and synthesize his or her experiences. Reflection can, of course, be conducted in an ongoing manner, but the authors insist that the combined factors of distance and time once the trip is concluded provide the learner with the proper perspective to judge what their travel abroad experiences mean to them and how those experiences ultimately shape their identity.

To a degree, this equation may be applicable in more common language learning situations, such as those involving classroom language learning settings. However, it seems far clearer to apply the equation to travel like SA for two reasons. First, as mentioned, SA study is

usually of a limited duration, spanning between a few weeks to a few months. Additionally, the learning setting is abroad, that is, in an environment likely very different from the learner's home environment. Thus, there is a stark delineation – more so than for a learner's language classes – between the time when learners are abroad learning or exposed to a new linguistic environment and when they are back in their home countries. This means that the necessary reflection time happens outside the sphere of the L2 language environment, meaning that it is “reflection” in the truest sense of the term.

Second, as Pitts (2009) explains, SA experiences heighten participants' sense of self, as they are “continually faced with challenges to their core identity” (p. 458). In Leia's case, there was obvious fluidity with her “perception of self,” the catalyst to which was her experiencing the STTA. Such fluidity or challenges to identity can and do occur in other (i.e., language classroom) settings, but SA experiences provide an opportunity for changes on a level of magnitude far beyond those found in the classroom. As such, TAME appears more appropriate, and hence more useful, to SA participants or those involved in STTA, so long as L2 learning is to some degree a goal.

In asserting the applicability of TAME, the researchers stress their belief that those preparing to embark on SA or STTA would benefit greatly from being made aware of the equation, for example, by it being brought to their attention in the language classroom prior to SA excursions or by it being provided in SA preparation materials. Immersing oneself in a host culture or new linguistic environment often acts as a catalyst for internal change (e.g., ways of speaking, acting, and thinking). As has been demonstrated, motivation, too, can be influenced by this immersion.

When looking toward future research directions, STTA participants like Leia are an underexamined group, as are the countless thousands of second or foreign language users who travel abroad every year for vacation, business, or other purposes. Such language users have not been the target of concerted research efforts, and as such, should be given their own designation as a topic of study in the research, as their identities and their perspectives on second or foreign language learning and use are just as important, as relevant, and as legitimate as those of institutionally affiliated SA participants. Because SA tends to involve participants of similar age (18-22), education level, and social class, all engaging in similar activities (Block, 2007b) that include classroom time, Leia's STTA, embarked on when she was just 12 years of age and technically not undertaken by choice, holds tenuous ties to SA, as it does also to migration studies that involve examining the transplanting of individuals into a new linguistic and cultural environment (for discussions and examples of migrant studies, see Bremer, Roberts, Vasseur, Simonot, & Broeder, 1996; Goldstein, 1996; Norton, 2000; Stevenson, 2011). Researching STTA will no doubt add a wealth of information to what we know about travelers' perspectives on the world, to the languages they study and use, and about the individuals themselves as language learners.

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