L2/3 attitudes and affiliation among English and Portuguese Major students, before and after extended study in Brazil

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Abstract

Anecdotal evidence of changes in learner motivation, attitudes and language aptitude post study abroad is commonly found among educators, and fellow students. Learners often return with new perspectives on and goals for language learning. With prolonged experiences in a different sociocultural environment, learners frequently develop new cultural adaptations and insights as well. This project aimed to chart the changes in language-learning motivation and language affiliation in nine English and Portuguese Majors, who spent one year studying Portuguese in Brazil. Data were collected through a short questionnaire and a focus group, conducted before and after the cohort's sojourn. The study was designed to be an expansion of previous research with students within the Multiple Languages Department (formally, International Languages and Culture Department). The following paper explores the responses given on the questionnaires and shows that participants acquired a better, more inclusive understanding of how both languages would benefit them in the future. The research also illustrated how complex identity is, and how broader, more adaptive techniques are required to capture the myriad ways individuals express their identities.

Introduction

Throughout this paper, I will use the term L2/3 to refer to the additional languages studied by the current study's participants. This term has been chosen to reflect the importance, or lack there of, which the learners/users place on each language.

As all Japanese mainstream-educated students have needed to study English and have had it prioritised in the curriculum since elementary school (Fukuda. 2010), the L2 is by default English, but this may not reflect the preference the learner has towards English, nor its perceived status. To allow for the ambiguity of learning preference and aptitude, and specifically for the context of this study, in which participants are formally studying at least one additional language, L2/3 will be used to mean any and all languages being studied. In our globalised world, spatial proximity largely no longer plays a role. In this environment, L2/3 learner/users and L1 users interact, blurring geographic borders and definitions "native" speakers. English, and other languages via the permeable nature of the globalised scapes (Appadurai. 1990), function in a way that traverses the learner/user dichotomy, and thus alters ideas of ownership and identity (Ryan. 2006). Our basic attitudes towards language learning, teaching, identification and usage therefore need to change. Taking all these into account, issues of motivation, language(s) affiliation, and personal investment are complex: defined solely by the individual within the temporal, sociocultural context (Syed. 2002).

Rationale

Prior to the present study, my research centred on language and identity among *kikokusei*: Japanese Returnees (Begg. 2011). As had also been found in other similar studies (Kanno. 2000a, 2000b, 2003, Ching Lin Pang. 2000, Goodman. 1993, Grigg-Saito 2008), for many returnees language provided a way to distinguish themselves from others, and express aspects of their personalities that, reportedly, could not be expressed in the L1. "[W]hen we learn a language, we are also learning a culture and forming our sense of self (identity)" (Jackson. 2008.

p24). However, during the pilot study for the current research, using the same instrumentation and methodological framework, the theme of identity was absent. The current project was founded on the question of why this was the case. I hypothesized that this was perhaps because the respondents in the pilot study had had no significant overseas experiences in the L2/3, and thus had not been able to bond with or develop a deeper connection with the language beyond the educational setting. Lacking meaningful access to the target language (TL) community, denies the learner/user access to the information needed to engender the want for integration (Ryan. 2006), or to construct an L2/3 identity. When they have the opportunity to interact with other users of the L2/3, sojourners are "not only exchanging information … they are constantly organizing and reorganizing a sense of who they are and how they relate to the social world" (Norton. 2000. p.444).

The aim of the study was to determine whether my hypothesis was correct: if the sojourners would begin to identify more with either Portuguese or English after a year living and studying in Brazil, and indicate that they felt more ownership of the L2/3. Furthermore, in an educational culture that places such great value on English, would participants develop a greater understanding of the roles it and Portuguese could play for them.

Research questions:

In what ways do students experience ownership of the L2/3 before and after a study abroad experience?

To what extent, if at all, do participants' views of the roles (and by proxy value) of each L2/3 change after a study abroad experience?

Methodology

This study is primarily qualitative and resists qualifying the themes revealed in the data in order to maintain the richness and diversity of that data and the participants' voices. To document the complexity and possible nuances of the research focus, and the integrity participants' contributions, utterances are presented unedited and in the language used by the participant. Furthermore, building on the works of Norton (1995, 2000), Mori (1997), Jackson (2008), Kanno (2000a, 2000b, 2003), and Kanno, Norton (2003) I am looking at the data from an emic perspective. That is to say that the respondent is conscious of his or her own identity and sense-making - "the rules, concepts, beliefs, and meanings of the people themselves, functioning within their own group" (van Lier 1990 in Jackson. 2008 p.28) and are therefore reliably reporting on these. For interpretation of the data, I have drawn made etic interpretations, drawn from past research and recurring themes.

Participants

The participants in this study were the 2013-2014 cohort, studying in Brazil. The group consisted of eight females and one male, aged between 19 and 21 years old, in either their junior or senior years. All were dual language majors of English and Portuguese within the Multiple Languages Department of Kanda University of International Studies. All of the participants had been students of mine as Freshmen, Sophomore, or for both years. All completed an ethics consent form

explaining the aims of the research, and explaining that they could decline to participate or withdraw from the study at any point. Furthermore, participants were asked to indicate whether they wished to be involved in both parts of the research, or only one of these. Eight of the cohort agreed to participant in the whole study (seven females and one male), while one of the cohort (female) preferred to only contribute to the online questionnaires.

Questionnaire

Following on from the previous studies (Begg, 2011), similar instrumentation was used. The participants were asked to complete a short, bilingual questionnaire - available in either English and Japanese, or Portuguese and Japanese - that requested biographical data and gave four sentences completion prompts. Slight variants of the sentence completion prompts had been used in the previous studies, and produced focused but diverse responses. They were therefore employed again in this study, and were as follows:

• (For me), English is...
• (For me), Portuguese is...
• English will help me...
• Portuguese will help me...

In addition to being able to withdraw from the study, the cohort were also able to withhold responses if they wished to do so. Participants were also informed that they could answer in their preferred language. This part of the research was administered online. Links to the questionnaire, in all language options, were sent

to participants pre-sojourn in December 2012, with a follow-up reminder sent in January 2013. Post-sojourn, links to the same questionnaires, in all language options were sent in March 2014, and the reminders sent in April of the same year. All participants completed this part of the research while in Japan; language choice and results will be outlined later in this paper. Data, not given in English, were translated by native speakers of the language used.

Data Analysis

Language choice

Table 1. Questionnaire completion language choice. (n=9)						
	Japanese/English questionnaire			Japanese/Portuguese questionnaire		
Language used	English	Japanese	Portuguese	English	Japanese	Portugese
Pre-Sojourn	6	1	0	0	0	2
Post-sojurn	4	0	0	1	2	2

The data from the questionnaires were collected and analysed with a grounded theory approach, see Creswell (2013). The current study is predominately qualitative, with no qualifying of the data. The only aspect that can be quantitatively analysed is that of language completion choice (see, Table 1). All nine of the cohort contributed to the questionnaires and although some chose to do so anonymously, we can identity certain trends. The most salient of these being the preferred language version of the questionnaire. Prior to leaving for Brazil, seven of the respondents chose to complete the English/Japanese version. Whereas, post sojourn, only four did so. Although the number of respondents completing the Portuguese/Japanese questionnaire increased - from two to five - the number of

those using Portuguese in their answers remained the same, pre- and post-sojourn. The number of participants using Japanese to complete the questionnaire rose, from one to two. As the second questionnaire was completed in March/April of 2014, prior to the participants returning to their studies, it is unlikely that they had much if any opportunity to use English since departing for Brazil. It is therefore unsurprising that we see a drop in the number of participants using the English/Japanese variant, and also a drop in the number completing either questionnaire in English.

Themes

Tools and work

In both the 2011 *kikokusei* study (Begg. 2011) and pilot study of this project, the image of English as a "tool" is strong and recurring. Societal language learning, that is the language education policy of a country such as Japan, is often undertaken to address economic and market agendas. Japanese students are aware of their government's push for improved English ability (Yashima. 2002, 2009). Conscious of the global economy, English language learners recognise the central role English has in the political, social, and economic systems in play today (Ryan. 2006). There is also little chance for Japanese students - especially those entering prestigious junior or senior high schools, or most universities - to avoid the "educatio-examination system" (Mc Veigh. 2002. p. 41) in which English features heavily. There is an acute awareness in learners of English's hyper-instrumentalism, and its importance for national development (Lo Bianco. 2009. p. 114). As such, the role English can play in learners' futures is known and tangible. English is a tool for communication and for work.

Pre-sojourn

For me English is…

- A tool to take communication
- It's important utility on my life.
- I like to study English. I think English is one of a tools to communicate each other.
- Second language and one of the tools for communication

Post-sojourn

For me English is…

- For me, English is one of the tool to communicate with my friends.
- the tool to take the communication
- ただの言語である。コミュニケーションをとるためだけの手段である.
  (It is just a language. A way (instrument) only to communicate.)
- I think that English is important to work.

For many Japanese learners, English "symbolises the world around Japan, something that connects them to foreign countries and foreigners" (Yashima. 2002. p. 57). It is a tool for connecting them to the world and others, different cultures and peoples.

Pre-sojourn

For me English is…

- Tool which is need for conversation with people who all over the world.
- Important for me. English is a tool for conversation with foreigners

- 国際社会で生きていくために (needed to live in the international community)

In the data collected after the participants returned from Brazil, there is a subtle shift from 'foreign' to 'global' connotations of English, and more explicit acknowledgement of the necessity of English in a globalised world.

Post-sojourn

For me English is…

- English is my life tools to communicate with everyone, to have many knowledge of other cultures.
- Inglês é uma língua que você pode conversar com várias pessoas do mundo. (English is a language you can talk with people of all around the world.)
- It is something I need to live in this world.
- English is a language you can talk with people of all around the world.

English will help me to…

- comunicar com os estrangeiros no mundo todo (It will help me to communicate with foreigners in the whole world)
- 他国籍の人とコミュニケーションがとれる (I can communicate with people of others nationalities.)
- Work of the future.
- To have some easy works if my capacity can help to this.But I think that my English capacity is low level so it will still not help me and my works.

While English is deeply rooted in globalisation, work, and examinations, Portuguese is something more: more positive, longer-term and active. As Rottava and Silva found (2014) in their study, learners of Portuguese were motivated to study an additional (not English) L2/3, for diverse reasons. There motivations "…derives from personal motivation but also from previous or current experiences….[and] for long-term motivations such as the beginnings of a career…" (p. 178). The theme of 'work' - which was cited only twice for English, pre-sojourn - is mentioned three times for Portuguese. However, the language seems more limited in scope than English. It will help only in situations with other Portuguese users.

Pre-sojourn

Portuguese will help me…

- Communicate with people who can speak Portuguese or to work
- 将来職を見つけるため (to find my future career)
- Find a job

The learners/user does not yet appreciate the intercultural communicative benefits this L2/3 provides. If we contrast these responses with those for English, we see how much more concrete its functions are. It has been rooted in participants' minds as the language of business, education, and a lingua franca/interpretive tool. English may just represent utility for these learners/users, but there is little doubt that it is a powerful tool.

Pre-sojourn

English will help me…

- My English ability will help me to study many thing. For example, when I must know something, if the data was written in English, I can understand it and I can know it from another side.

- English will help me to communicate with people who don't know each other. I don't know yet that my English skill use the business but I want to use this tool in the future.

Post-sojourn

English will help me…

- Quando começar a trabalhar, se tiver alguma coisa para traduzir ou ter que entender, com toda certeza vai ajudar. e para fazer amigos do mundo, usando inglês também vai ajudar bastante (When I start to work, it will help me if I need to translate or understand something, and using English I will be able to make friends in all world.)

Challenge, joy

While English is a compulsory academic subject, with ephasized uses, Portuguese is self-selected, what participants want to study. That Portuguese is less utilitarian and obligatory than English might suggest that the participants had less impetus to study, but this lack off external, or instrumental motivation, is not necessarily a disadvantage for educators. The participants ascribed many positive characteristics to the language. In this and the pilot study, recurring metaphors of 'challenge', and self-selected 'goals' emerge.

Pre-sojourn

Portuguese is…

- 目標、挑戦 (goal, challenge)
- Thing which I want to study all the time.
- I guess to study Portuguese is new challenge in university for me.

Portuguese will help me…

- Portuguese will help me to feel pleasure of study.

Portuguese is '*wanted*' and there is clear agency to develop skills and aptitude in the language. There is also a subtle indication that successful linguistic competency is achievable, whereas it may not be in English. The transformation from English learner to English user, is seen as an on-going, perhaps never-ending process. What is more, without perceived success English is not an asset.

Pre-sojourn

English will help me…

- Still I have to study English so now my English doesn't help me.

Portuguese will help me…

- I think my Portuguese can help me a little because after the entered to university, I studied Portuguese very hard so I have confidence in my Portuguese.

The above comments are from the same participant and clearly illustrate how

Portuguese is more accessible in her mind. She is the agent and accessor of Portuguese. In English she does not feel as confident or successful. In the post-sojourn questionnaire, this dichotomy is echoed. A different participant talks at length about her admiration for her English teacher and her own ability by comparison.

Post-sojourn

English is…

- "憧れ。小さいころ英語をならっていた先生が、英語を流暢に話す姿にあこがれていた。まだまだ近づけてないからこそ、もっと勉強に励みたいと思う。" (I admired my English teacher, when I was a child, seeing her talking fluent English. As I couldn't achieve the same quality, I need to study more hard.)

Portuguese is…

- 失いたくないもの。留学にも行き、自分のうまいとは言えないポルトガル語に向き合ったからこそ自信を持てるようになった。これからもポル語学習に励むみ、磨いていきたい。(Something I don't want to lose. I studied abroad and could give attention to my Portuguese skill which was not good. After that I became confident and from now on I will keep studying and brushing my Portuguese.)

Learner/users "may feel motivated to pursue language study because they perceive that this is what they are good at, or what they like best, and where therefore their future potential must lie" (Ushido. 2002. p. 118)." This increased

confidence could explain the higher frequency of the themes of 'life' and 'future' emerging. Post-sojourn there is strong indication that motivations for learning and using Portuguese are life-long and teleological. The following contributions exemplify this theme.

Post-sojourn

Portuguese is…

- uma lingua muito importante para mim e que eu quero usar resto da minha vida (Is a very important language to me and that I want to use for the rest of my life.)
- Portuguêsé a minha língua favorita e também eu acredito que seja uma língua que eu vou usar para o resto da minha vida. (Portuguese is my favorite language and I believe I will use it during all my life.)

Portuguese will help me…

- My life.
- 将来の自分。これからさらに勉強し、ポルトガル語を必要としている場所で、将来活躍できるだろう。(That's my future. I will study further and will definitely work in a place using Portuguese in the future.)

The three language advantage

Post-sojourn

Portuguese is…

- 自分にとって将来性のある武器 (It is for me a weapon with possibilities.)

After returning from Brazil, the participants display a greater understanding of how advantageous their Portuguese ability is. They also seem to have more concrete visions of how the language can be used in Japan, Brazil and elsewhere. The images of 'bridging' and 'helping' communities emerge:

Post-sojourn

Portuguese will help me…

- ポルトガル語圏内の国々と日本の橋渡し (I can work as a bridge between Japan and Portuguese language countries.)
- I want to work in brazil in the future so my Portuguese can help my work. In japan there are a lot of Brazilian people and there are a lots of problem of them . So I want to use my Portuguese skill for them.

There is also increased appreciation of the language being used for intercultural communication; Post-sojourn, Portuguese can help with understanding difference and facilitating communication not only with other Portuguese users, but more widely.

Post-sojourn

Portuguese will help me…

- To help my works and it gives me many works also. In addition, if i go to some country where cannot use English. Portuguese will help me and give me some hints to live or visit there.
- Portuguese is also my life tools to communicate with everyone, to have knowledge, and to have works.

- Portuguese is the thing to connect with people also . **In japan, there are a lot of people can speak in English but most of people can't talk in other language. That's why a Portuguese is on of the my strong point.**

The highlighted section in the above quote represents the most salient transformation seen pre- and post-sojourn. Portuguese becomes an asset, "a weapon with possibilities" It is not clear whether the participant has selected the metaphoric wording here, with the intention of suggesting the broad connotations 'weapon' evokes, as metaphor is difficult for learners (Wearing. 2009. p1027). But, "language learners possess certain symbolic, cultural and linguistic capital that they are prepared to invest in the learning process and unsurprisingly they are looking to achieve a significant return on any investment" (Ryan. 2006. p36). Portuguese provides participants with an advantage over English-only language learners. In the pilot study, participants were also beginning to become aware of the competitive edge having knowledge of three languages brought them.

Heritage languages

"Heritage membership, something that has been tugging at them for sometime, is now being realised and exercised through language study. It is very emotional, immediate, and personal for them."   (Syed. 2002. p. 141).

Pre-sojourn

For me Portuguese is…

- My mother language . And it is one of the necessary language.

- It's my second mother tongue. …My nationalities are Japanese and Brazilian. However, I still not be able to speak Portuguese enough.

A heritage identity includes aspects of one's self that are connected to race, religion, ethnicity, and language. These naturally overlap with the social self, how a subject projects or values each aspect of their identity, and this is influenced or even controlled by situated sociocultural conventions (Syed. 2002. p. 129). The first step in defining who we are, and establishing a distinct identity, is understanding ourselves (Ryan. 2006. p. 38). From the data, two heritage language learners can be identified. Syed found that for many heritage language learners of Hindi, continued investment in the learning process met certain needs and fulfilled longstanding sociocultural desires. Motivations for studying Hindi were personal, as well as professional or academic, and also included concrete future L2-self visualisations, such as being able to communicate with heritage-language-speaking family members. In the past, the time needed for Syed's and this study's participants to self-actualise their sociocultural identity may have been occupied with trying to 'fit-in' or simply grow into themselves.

Being perceived as different is an ongoing psychological drain on individuals (Syed. 2002. p. 130) and in a country with a group-oriented socioculture, such as Japan, this cost can be high. The discrimination experienced by returnees, bicultural individuals, and so-called "*hafu*" is palpable and well documented (Begg 2011, Kanno 2003, Goodman 1993, Grigg-Saito 2008, Mori 1997, Norton 2000). However, at university, once many heritage language learners begin to enter adulthood, they are freer to develop a more inclusive sense of who they are. Our

heritage language learners, pre-sojourn, could be said to be in the "moratorium" stage of psychological identity development, when they are actively engaged in resolving identity issues (p. 130).

There is no further mention of connecting to a second 'mother tongue' in the post-sojourn data. Although it is not clear why this is not a recurring theme, it is possible that the two heritage language learners may have discovered that they were "comfortable" with who they were and no longer wished "to 'become' a native of another language and culture" (Pavlenko. Lantoff. 2000. p. 170). It is also possible that in achieving their goal of (re)connecting with the heritage language, they no longer questioned this facet of their identity, and it therefore did not occur to include it in their responses. These positive interpretive theories are preferable as "[i]t has been argued that those individuals who identify strongly with their heritage culture are more likely to use that identification to enhance their sense of self" (Syed. 2002. p. 131) using this to improve their confidence, understanding of their capabilities, limitations and opportunities and developed stronger agency. It is possible, and indeed hoped that the heritage learners reached "identity achieved status" post-sojourn and that they have resolved any sense of identity crisis and found harmony.

Influencing factors

Job hunting

University-aged and older Japanese language learners, while interested in travel, are largely uninterested in integration into foreign communities (Lamb. 2004, Irie. 2003, Ryan. 2006). We also see this arguably inward-looking trend evidenced in

decreased participation overseas study abroad programs and a reluctance of Japanese to undertake expat placements (Bertumen. 2014). While international experience is mostly valued elsewhere "in Japan's case foreign study earns virtually no positive evaluation—and if students spend over a year abroad, it is liable to have a negative impact on their prospects for finding a good job after graduation" (Harano. 2013). The traditional process of looking for full-time employment in Japan is intensely difficult and so distressing that one in five will contemplate suicide during the ordeal (Otake. 2013). The hiring process, involving long information sessions and batteries of interviews, is disruptive to university study, routinely occupying the majority of job-seekers/students' time and energy (Japan Times Editorial. 2014). With this in mind, it is little wonder that "work" and "future" reveal themselves to be dominant themes, for both languages, post-sojourn, when participants were all engaged in this activity.

Language choice bias

As others studies (Burton 2011, Ervin-Tripp 1985, Mori 1997) have found, the language used to contribute to the study can influence not only the nuances of what is stated, but often the content matter. As a mostly monolingual, native-English-speaking researcher, and a current or former instructor of the participants, I have undoubtedly influenced the data in some way. Were a similar study conducted by another researcher, perhaps one who is either bicultural, multilingual, or simply not marked as a 'native' speaker of one of the target languages, we would likely encounter different themes in the responses. One method for attempting to capture purer, less researcher-biased data could be "self-translation" or documentation of "inner speech" which Pavlenko and Lantoff (2000) describe as

the way individuals mediate their relationship with themselves, their identity and consciousnesses (p. 165). Diaries are frequently used to capture first-person narratives and retroactive sense-making of events (Jackson 2008, Pavlenko. Lantoff. 2000). Expanded case studies and qualitative interviews, are also effective ways to develop a deeper understanding of specific experiences and to tease-out individual's motivations and feelings (Kanno 2000a, 2000b, Norton 1995, 2000). Within the current context, at university, with instructor-researchers there is still the issue of language choice influencing data outcomes. Furthermore participants are routinely engaging in job-hunting during data collection, and it is therefore challenging to conduct such time-intensive research without undermining the participants' ability to find employment. However, future research into this area of learner experience is useful and interesting.

Conclusions

"Language learners are not just communicators and problem solvers, but whole persons with hearts, bodies, and minds, with memories, fantasies, loyalties, identities."   (Kramsch. 2006. p. 251)

For educators and those involved in designing study abroad preparation courses, consideration should be given to how to encourage and maintain learners' engagement with and study of the L2/3. Motivations for language-learning and undertaking study abroad are deeply personal and multifaceted. As such, encouraging self-determination and autonomy - involving learners in the learning process, or facilitating choice making, goal setting, and engendering personal responsibility for learning - should be a priority (Ushioda. 2008. p. 26).

Opportunities should be created for the cohorts to collectively discuss fears, pedagogical and personal goals, and interests, and to form a support network. The role of the educator or organiser here is to help learners visualise their desired outcomes for the sojourn. Sojourners should be able to mentally (or literally) role-play potentially difficult situations - such as that shown during the focus group - as a means of ameliorating anxiety and facilitating positive outcomes. Post study abroad, learners can reflect on their experiences, achievements, and problems in constructive ways. They may also wish to brainstorm ways that this experience, and their linguistic gains, can be utilised as a future asset.

"Notions of identity and language are rarely separated" (Lo Bianco. 2009. p. 119), and it is the vital that learner/users are provided with a socioculturally supportive environment in which they can cultivate their sense of self. It is also important, especially in the group-centric socioculture of Japan, to embrace a worldmindedness (Lo Bianco. 2009) approach to language teaching and discussions of identity, as an openness to difference, plurilingualism, social pluralism, and third-culture identities. "[A]n analysis of linguistic and cultural identity that is solely dependent on notions of nationality or ethnicity surely belongs in another era" (Ryan. 2006).

The acquisition metaphor of language learning, "compels us to think of knowledge as a commodity that is accumulated by the learner and to constitute the mind as the repository where the learner hoards the commodity" (Pavlenko. Lantoff. 2000. p. 155). By seeing language learning as an ongoing, individual process, framing short-comings as temporary, and encouraging learners to maintain a positive

attitude "these patterns of thinking seem to illustrate ways in which learners can take control of their affective learning experience, [and learners] do not succumb to the debilitating belief that they are simply no good at language learning" (Ushido. 2002. p. 120-1). In an educational setting that provides a supportive environment learners will develop increased self-actualization and growth (Syed. 2002. p. 129).

When learner/users are motivated to study a third (or more) language, the autonomy to develop individually meaningful goals. Motivation is more complex, dynamic, and varied than the static constructs we typically employ when trying to quantify learners' investment in the L2/3. The learner/user's motivations may not be visible to outsiders and as such attempts to identify or even encourage learning may be detrimental. We should encourage learner/users to reflect and examine for themselves "what patterns of thinking and belief underlie such an activity" (Ushioda. 2001. p. 96) and facilitate their ability to utilise these, or challenge these if the belief is a negative influence.

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