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# **THE INFLUENCE OF A STUDY ABROAD PROGRAM ON JAPANESE UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AND THE ELABORATION OF “MOTIVATIONAL L2 SELVES”**

Masanori Matsumoto

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Three university students from Japan on a five-week study-abroad program in Australia participated in a case study that investigated the impact of L2 learning experiences on changes in their motivation, especially in relation to development of their ‘Motivational L2 Selves’ as introduced by Dörnyei (2009). The study collected both qualitative and quantitative data in three interviews and weekly learning logs during the program. The results from the learning logs showed an upward trend in the level of motivational intensity as the program proceeded, with the participants’ positive perception of environmental factors. The study confirmed that learner perception of the same motivational factor could vary, and perception can be affected by their prior learning experience and L1 culture. The study, however, failed to provide positive evidence that the study abroad program can help the elaboration of the L2 Self, though the learning experiences in the L2 context enhanced their instrumental motivation.

Keywords: Learner perceptions, Motivational variables, Educational culture, Learning experience, Second language (L2) learning context

## 1 Introduction

Second language (L2) learners' motivation has long been studied since the early 1960's by a number of researchers such as Robert Gardner and his colleagues (e.g., Gardner, 1988, 2006; Gardner & Lambert, 1959, 1972; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1991), and more recently by Zoltán Dörnyei and his associates (e.g., Dörnyei, 1994, 2000, 2009; Dörnyei & Otto, 1998; Waninge, De Bot & Dörnyei, 2014), and is regarded as one of the key factors that determine the level of success in L2 acquisition (Gass & Selinker, 2008). When learning an L2, contextual factors can affect learner motivation in complex ways (Campbell & Storch, 2011; Waninge et al., 2014). Contextual factors at play such as teachers and peer learners may, however, be perceived differently by the same learner when the learner experiences two different TL learning environments; L2 learning in the TL community and foreign language learning where learners learn the TL in their L1 environment. According to Dörnyei (2000), how learners view different learning environments, and how various contextual factors in those environments affect the learners' motivation are important issues given the dynamic changes in L2 motivation that consistently occur.

The present study investigated motivation for learning English among Japanese university students participating in an intensive study abroad program in Australia. These Japanese students had been learning English primarily as a compulsory school subject in a Japanese educational context, where Japanese high school students' primary orientation to study English is instrumental in order to pass entrance examinations to higher education institutions (Kelly, 2005; LoCasto, 1996; Morrow, 1987). The main aim of this study is to explore how the university students who achieved their principal English learning

objective to enter university successfully, perceive their L2 study abroad environment in Australia and the challenges that go with it, and how that perception influences the development of their motivation along with the reasons behind the changes. The study will also examine how the learning experience and the learners' perceptions affect the elaboration of their 'L2 Selves' within the L2 Motivational Self System introduced by Dörnyei (2009).

## **2 Research Background**

### **2.1 L2 motivation**

Since the introduction of the 'Process Model of L2 Motivation' by Dörnyei (2000), and Dörnyei & Otto (1998), the unstable and fluctuating nature of motivation has been one of the primary concerns in the study of L2 acquisition. In the model, Dörnyei and Otto (1998) claimed that the executive type of motivation while learning an L2 in a language program is consistently influenced by various contextual variables. Based on this claim, many researchers have investigated how motivation changes, to what extent, and the reasons for the changes based on diverse research contexts (e.g., Busse & Walter, 2013; Campbell & Storch, 2011; Kozaki & Ross, 2011; Waninge et al., 2014). Common among the research findings is that contextual and environmental factors affect the learners' motivation in a complex way over the course of time (see e.g., Busse & Walter, 2013; Gardner, Masgoret, Tennant & Mihic, 2004; Koizumi & Matsuo, 1993). These studies investigated the impact of language programs on L2 learner motivation. The results of the studies seem to indicate that although L2 learners may initially view some classroom factors favourably, the experience of L2 learning in a classroom may also influence the

learners negatively in the long run, and their motivation could deteriorate as a function of how they view the various contextual and environmental factors.

Regarding the learning environment, the classroom is the primary context where learner motivation continuously interacts with various contextual and environmental factors (Julkunen, 2001). Among those factors, the teacher has been the primary focus to study how she affects learner motivation since the ways L2 learners interact with the teacher and their perceptions of the interactions may affect L2 learners' motivation (Chambers, 1999; Williams & Burden, 1997). Dörnyei and Ushioda (2011) stated that the language teacher's strong commitment to teaching "instils in students a similar willingness to pursue knowledge to a large extent" (p. 188). Roth, Assor, Kanat-Maymon and Kaplan (2007) also supported the positive relationship between self-determined teacher motivation for teaching, and their students' autonomy development and motivation to learn in an Israeli context. The teacher's intentional use of motivational strategies has also shown a relationship with the enhancement of learners' motivation (see, e.g., Guilloteaux & Dörnyei, 2008). Teachers' presence and what they do in a language classroom, however, could also have some negative effect on students' motivation, leading to demotivation among language learners. Sakai and Kikuchi's (2009) study of 656 high school students learning English in Japan found that individual teacher behaviour and their use of a grammar-translation method were among the reasons why the students' motivation deteriorated. In sum, teachers in an L2 classroom seem to be a complex motivator that affects learners' motivation either positively or negatively depending on what they do, how they behave and what they use to teach an L2.

## **2.2 The impact of study abroad**

Learning an L2 in different environments also seems to have some influence on the change in learner motivation depending on various types of living and learning experiences to which the learners are exposed. One common issue here is how a study abroad program may cause a change in their motivation. Weger (2013) found some complex results in her study of 131 learners in a US-based study abroad program. The study found that while the majority of those learners viewed their personal English use in the L2 environment, the value they attach to their English learning, and 'International Posture' (Yashima, 2000), (associated with the desire to use English in international contexts) as key motivators, their motivation had a negative or relatively weak association with confident use of English and attitudes towards the English-speaking community. Serafini (2017) noted the importance of considering the cultural context that reflects what role teachers and students are expected to play, as well as the social and cultural context that includes the relationship with other learners and the teacher, or with other speakers of the TL community. A new learning context where learners interact with learners of different L1s and the educational culture may have a detrimental impact if the learners experience difficulty in communicating with peers and teachers in the TL, along with unfamiliar learning activities due to the relatively lower level of proficiency and little knowledge of the values attached to the TL culture (Gu, Schweisfurth, & Day, 2010; Yu, 2013). However, by perceiving the new environment as a factor that enhances the development of the required TL skills, learners may come to regard the cultural and contextual differences as necessary challenges with some help from peers, teachers, and family members (Matsumoto, 2018; Yashima et al., 2004). Despite these discussions, researchers have not agreed on what leads the learners to view the same environment

either positively or negatively, and therefore, why the same factor affects motivation negatively or positively to achieve their learning goals.

### **2.3 The L2 Motivational Self**

Another recent development in accounting for the role of motivation in L2 acquisition is Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Motivational Self System, which emphasises the importance of the L2 learners' possession of vivid and elaborated images of the 'Self' that are strongly associated with the use of TL. The model's central framework consists of three components, the Ideal L2 Self, Ought-to L2 Self, and L2 Learning Experiences (Dörnyei, 2009). The model conceptualises one's future self as either 'Ideal' or 'Ought-to'. The former has its basis in the intrinsic (and more internalised extrinsic) motivation associated with fluent L2 use that the learner desires to achieve in the future and the latter, more extrinsic (i.e. less internalised) motivation associated with negative outcomes that the learner wants to avoid because failing to succeed may result in embarrassment or disadvantage (Dörnyei, 2009). The learners' intention to narrow the 'gap' between one's future self, either Ideal or Ought-to, that includes proficiency in the L2, and the current self that lacks the knowledge and skills of the TL constitutes the motivational force to attain the future Self (Dörnyei, 2009). The third component, L2 learning experiences, influences "the executive motives that link to the immediate learning environment and actual learning experiences" (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 29) in which L2 learners are involved.

Since its introduction, the L2 Motivational Self System has been extensively studied by numerous researchers (e.g., Csizér & Lukács, 2010; Moskovsky, Racheva, Assulaimani & Harkins, 2016; Papi & Abdollahzadeh, 2012; Ryan, 2009; Sugita-McEown, Sawaki, &

Harada, 2017; Taguchi, Magid & Papi, 2009). Despite its claim relating to the importance of the future L2 Selves as a strong motivator in L2 learning, those studies found complex results regarding which L2 Self constituted a positive contributor to successful L2 learning and how learning experiences relate to the L2 selves. Csizér and Lukács (2010) found the degree to which the Ideal L2 Self could work as either a positive or negative motivator depends on which of two foreign languages, English and German, is studied first in a Hungarian context. The results showed English as the first foreign language had a positive result in the development of the Ideal L2 Self that also worked positively in learning German as the second foreign language, but not in the opposite order. They argued the value attached to English as a global Lingua Franca could be the cause of the different results. Moskovsky et al.'s (2016) study found that the L2 Motivational Self System had the power to predict the intended learning behaviour among Saudi learners of English as a foreign language, but the researchers carefully noted also that the learners' intended learning effort may not automatically result in increased L2 proficiency. The study by Taguchi et al. (2009) revealed a cross-cultural difference that affected the three primary components of the L2 Motivational Self System among Japanese, Chinese, and Iranian learners of English as a foreign language. Their study found the Ideal L2 Self to have a better explanatory power in relation to learners' intended learning efforts than Ought-to Self; however, there was a cross-cultural difference in the learners' perception of the level of importance underlying the promotion and prevention focus respectively associated with the Ideal and Ought-to Selves. The authors suggested that the discussion of the L2 Self System needs to consider contextual and cultural differences among L2 learners. Papi and Abdollahzadeh's (2012) research on Iranian secondary school learners of English found that there was not a direct relationship between the learners' Ideal L2



Selves and their motivated behaviour in the classroom, and as a result, their actual achievement in L2 learning. They assumed that the future L2 image may work only in “the deeper level of motivated behaviour such as self-regulatory behaviour than the surface classroom measure” (p. 588).

A possible reason for such complexity in the results is whether the learners' full development of the L2 Self is complete or not, and how the individual learner's learning experience affects the internalisation of the L2 Selves. Dörnyei (2009) stressed that the L2 learners' selves would not impact on motivational behaviour properly unless several conditions were met, such as “the availability of elaborate and vivid future self-image and perceived plausibility of the future selves” (p. 18). Given this, how do learners develop the actual image of their future selves through various learning experiences? Japanese learners of EFL are often perceived as holding collectivist characteristics such as conservatism, tolerance of other people's behaviour and harmony with others (Sugita-McEown, Sawaki & Harada, 2017), while high school students' motivation to learn English is predominantly instrumental in order to pass university entrance examinations (Kelly, 2005; LoCasto, 1996; Morrow, 1987). If so, it is meaningful to investigate how a change in learning environment during study abroad affects Japanese university students' elaboration of the image of their future selves.

## **2.4 Research questions**

Various previous studies as have been discussed above revealed that L2 learners' motivation frequently changes as a result of how each learner perceives different contextual variables and develops her future intentions concerning learning the L2.

Bernaus and Gardner (2008) supported the importance of learner perceptions as a contributing variable for discussing the causes of motivational changes. Kozaki and Ross (2011) noted the importance of considering the individual learner in relation to motivational changes because the “individual learner is the epicentre of cognitive and affective processes that drive successful language learning” (p. 1). Against the background of this individualisation in the investigation of motivational changes, Ushioda (2009) stressed the need to introduce a “relational rather than linear view of the multiple contextual elements while viewing motivation as an organic process that emerges through the complex system of interrelations” (p. 220). Each L2 learner should perceive their current learning experiences and environmental elements in their own way, interpret them based on their values associated with their cultural backgrounds and previous learning experiences, and then, attribute them to their motivational and attitudinal forces for future L2 learning as Matsumoto (2018) mentioned. As such, research should take more personal perceptions of various learning contextual factors into consideration and carefully examine each learner’s reflected intentions and motivational changes longitudinally. Given these developments in recent studies of L2 motivation and issues raised by various authors, the present study aims to address the following research questions:

- 1) How does motivation change among Japanese university students who learn English in a study abroad program in Australia, and what do they perceive as the factors affecting changes in their motivation?
- 2) How do the study abroad context and the learners’ learning experiences affect the development of their ‘Ideal’ or ‘Ought-to Selves’?

### 3 Methodology

Participants in the current study were Japanese learners of English from a private university in Tokyo spending a five-week-study period at a university language institute in Australia. In total, twelve students volunteered to participate in the current research; however, only three of them, one female and two males, aged 19, completed five weekly learning logs for the entire program and attended three interviews at the beginning, in the middle and at the end of the program. During the program, the participants were living in different houses individually with a local resident family. Classes were held five hours per day, five days per week. The students also had a weekly excursion to visit local places of interest organised by the institute they attended.

Table 1 captures the participants' background information. They were all second-year students from the same university in Tokyo. Student 1 was the only female, majoring in bioresource science, and visiting Australia for the first time. She was at a lower intermediate level, equivalent to B1 on the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). Students 2 and 3 were male students at the upper intermediate level of proficiency (CEFR B2). Student 2 majored in mathematics, and this was his second visit to Australia, while student 3 majored in international relations and had never been to Australia before. They all participated in this study abroad program as an elective in their English subject for extra credit in their degrees. The participants had been attracted to enter the university because of this study abroad program whereby students were automatically allowed to visit Australia to study English.

**TABLE 1. Description of the participants**

Student No.	Age	Gender	Major	Visit to Australia	Level of class proficiency
1	19	Female	Bioresource science	1st time	CEFR B1
2	19	Male	Mathematics	2nd time	CEFR B2
3	19	Male	International Relations	1st time	CEFR B2

CEFR = Common European Framework of Reference  
 B1 = Lower intermediate level B2 = Upper intermediate level

Quantitative and qualitative data, collected in questionnaire-type learning logs and semi-structured interviews, attempted to detect the changes in the participants' motivation. A weekly learning log (see Appendix 1) was distributed to each participant to complete and submit to the researcher directly either by hand or e-mail. The learning log consisted of six questions regarding the level of motivational intensity, the participants' own perceptions of changes in motivation and the reasons for the changes, the environmental/contextual factors affecting the motivation, the purpose of learning English, and any perceptions of change in orientations for learning English during and after experiencing the study abroad program. The individual participant's level of motivational intensity each week was specified by a seven-point Likert scale from one for the weakest to seven for the strongest, which participants chose in the learning log. The answers to the open-ended questions in the learning log also aimed to detect other motivational and attitudinal changes. Since some participants' English proficiency was not high enough to express subtle nuances of what they may feel or think, the participants were allowed to use their L1 Japanese in completing the learning logs.

The participants were also required to participate in an interview, three times each in week one, week three and week five where they responded to structured questions (see

Appendix 2) to the researcher directly. Each interview lasted 15 to 30 minutes depending on the amount of information the interviewee provided. The participants used Japanese in the interviews, which were recorded and transcribed into English by the researcher. Depending on the level of development in their answers, extended questions were asked to clarify how the participants perceived their experiences of learning English in the given educational and cultural context in Australia. The study aimed to detect the development of the learners' image of their L2 Self in relation to learning English, as captured through the answers provided in the interviews regarding the reasons for learning English and any changes in their future goals since the beginning of the study abroad program. The changes in motivation and the reasons for the changes, along with the participants' views on the environmental factors were explored using two different methods, namely the learning logs and interviews. The qualitative data collected in the logs and interviews were categorised into reasons for the change in motivational intensity, change in the reasons for learning English, positive or negative perception of the environmental factors, and the development of the L2 Self. The positive perception was detected by their statements such as 'developed stronger motivation', 'want to challenge', 'need to study harder', 'do not want to be left behind', and 'helped me much', while negative perception was captured by expressions such as 'weaker motivation', 'more anxiety', 'hard to follow', 'little understanding', and 'better than me'. The statements reflect the approach proposed by Hadfield and Dörnyei (2013, p. 4).

#### **4 Results**

*RQ 1 How does motivation change among Japanese university students learning English in a study abroad program, and what do they perceive as the factors affecting the change in their motivation?*

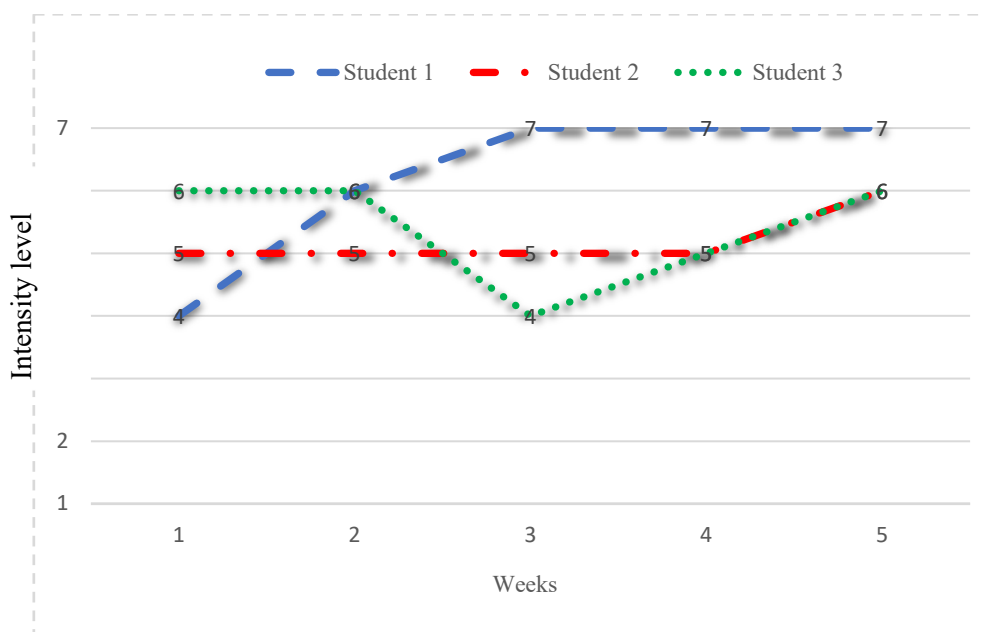
Table 2 and Figure 1 show the motivational changes detected in the seven-point Likert scale submitted through the weekly learning logs.

**TABLE 2. Weekly changes in motivational intensity**

Student No.	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
1	4	6	7	7	7
2	5	5	5	5	6
3	6	6	4	5	6

Range: 1 (Weakest) to 7 (Strongest)

**FIGURE 1. Weekly changes in the level of motivational intensity**



The results show a general upward trend as the program proceeds. Only student 3 demonstrates a V-shape change, downward at the middle of the program and then, upward towards the end. Previous studies (e.g., Gardner et al., 2004; Koizumi & Matsuo, 1993; Busse & Walter, 2013) also reported deterioration of L2 learners' motivation. However, the present study suggests that it may not be a universal phenomenon across learners while any decline may only become apparent over a longer period of learning, as opposed to over a short, albeit intensive five-week program. The result indicates that participating in an intensive study abroad program may provide the students with a generally positive influence to develop their motivation as they spend more time in the program. What seems to be complicated, however, is that the answers to the question regarding the change of motivation reported in the learning logs do not fully conform to the results in the Likert scale, as we will see in the following.

Table 3 displays the participants' verbal comments regarding their perceived change in level of motivation compared to the previous weeks and possible reasons for the changes. Student 1 marked level seven on the Likert scale in the final week of the study, the same as the week before, but she noted her motivation was strengthened compared to week four. Student 2 circled level five in week four and wrote that his motivation was stronger, although level 5 was the same as the week before. Student 3's report in week two also showed a discrepancy between the level demonstrated by the Likert scale and his verbal indication compared to the first week. The results from the Likert scale did not indicate any changes, but he claimed his motivation had developed. These results might suggest that each learner circled the level of motivation at each week intuitively disregarding the

level they circled in the previous week, and then, answered the question if their level of motivation was strengthened or weakened without comparing the number they had indicated previously. In other words, self-reporting of the level of motivation at different stages of L2 learning might be a simple indication of the level that each learner instinctively sensed at each time they answered the questions, and thus, the change in the level of motivation detected by the same Likert scale may not exhibit each learner's subtle variation of the level of motivation accurately.

**TABLE 3. Verbal indications of changes in motivation**

	Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4	Week 5
Student 1	S (4)	S (6)	S (7)	N.C. (7)	S (7)
Reason for the change	Need to concentrate on the class to follow what is happening. I could understand what peers and the teacher say a little.	I got used to the class. Could see my current level and what is needed to achieve my target level.	Motivation was stronger because of the class presentation, which required me to study and use English a lot.	Come to be able to communicate with peers, friends, and host family in English better.	Through the program, I found my strong and weak points in English and realised the actual improvement in my English.
Student 2	S (5)	N.C. (5)	N.C. (5)	S (5)	S (6)
Reason for the change	I must use English all the time.	A little overwhelmed by peers who speak a lot in English.	I have slacked in the middle of the course.	I had to study for the test.	I got used to the use of English for communication.
Student 3	S (6)	S (6)	W (4)	S (5)	S (6)
Reason for the change	The English - speaking environment is stimulating me.	Learning problems in the previous week encouraged me to try harder.	Just get used to the new learning environment.	A new teacher is in the class, and we had a test.	Need to communicate with many new students and discussion activity in the class.

\* W = Weakened

N.C. = Not changed

S = Strengthened

\* The figures in brackets are the results of the Likert scale with a maximum of 7.



Regarding the perceived reasons for the change in motivation, the participants reported a wide range of causes, but some tendencies did emerge. In week one, all the participants noted that their motivation was robust compared to when they learned English in Japan chiefly because of the new L2 learning environment where they had to speak English all the time with teachers as well as their peer learners. Students 1 and 3 stated that learning in an L2 English environment stimulated them to learn English harder. Student 2 wrote that the English-speaking setting was the primary reason for the enhancement of his motivation and expressed in the first interview that his motivation was slightly strengthened but also that he felt a little overwhelmed. He had previously experienced study abroad when he was in high school, such that he probably knew how hard it would be for him to follow classes entirely in English. Student 1 also expressed some anxiety about the English as an L2 environment, stating that because the entire course was conducted only in English, she had to concentrate on following what was happening in the class but understood only a little. Student 3 showed a V-shape curve in motivation. At first, his motivation was robust as he expected the new learning environment should be a positive stimulus because he had to speak English to everyone on every occasion. Then, he experienced a slack in the middle of the program as the daily activities became a routine and monotonous. His motivation, however, developed again towards the end of the program due to the introduction of an exam and a new teacher. Taken together, the development and deterioration in their motivational intensity might reflect the different perceptions that the students had of the same factors and thus, viewed them positively to enhance motivation or negatively to weaken it.

Similarly, learning experiences in the classroom, including interactions with peer students, affected the participants intricately. The students were involved in peer communicative activities that they had not experienced much in their classes in Japan. When they saw other students actively participating and performing successfully in the tasks, their motivation was enhanced, possibly because they developed a positive sense of competition. Student 2 indicated “classmates” in every log as the strongest motivator. They included new students from Japan with whom student 2 compared his own performance in the class activities. Student 3 also specified “classmates” in weeks two and five, and “teacher” in week four. Student 1 wrote in the logs:

Week 2 log:

*We have a lot of pairwork and discussions. Everyone participates enthusiastically that motivates me.*

*I have a Brazilian friend in the class who works so hard that I don't want to be left behind him. I also enjoy the pair-works that I believe motivates me.*

Week 3 log:

*I had a presentation, so I spent a lot of time preparing for that and I tried hard to make myself understood better.*

However, the students seem to have also perceived peers and communicative activities negatively. Student 2 wrote:

Week 2 log:

*I could communicate with peers little by little in English, but also a bit worried as there were many things that I could not follow.*

Week 3 log:

*I came to feel little difficulty in communication but sometimes what teacher explained was too hard for me to follow.*

Week 5 log:

*I had to communicate appropriately in the discussion that motivated me to learn harder.*

By perceiving peer learners as a competitor or a target, the students were nonetheless encouraged to learn more. Student 2 answered in the interviews as below:

Second interview in week 3:

*New students joined in our class. They are good at English. I want to be more active than those newcomers because I thought I had to. They can easily say what I struggle to express.*

Third interview in week 5:

*In the listening class, when we were answering comprehension questions, other students didn't hesitate to ask questions. They demanded what the new words mean or what the spellings were. I heard them asking those questions from the beginning, and I thought they spoke English very well as I didn't know how to ask those questions in the first week. I worried if it was OK to interrupt the teacher and to ask questions. So, I didn't say anything, but I found what was happening around me. Peers were asking questions, so I tried to ask questions as they did.*

[So, your classmates were like your role model of English learning in the class to you?]

*Yes, they are.*

Another common factor among the students was the actual class tasks and requirements. Student 1 noted a class presentation in week three, and the two male students also remarked that a test in week four worked to enhance their motivation. External pressure to study in a class context could be a positive enforcer, especially to those Japanese learners. The findings above seem to imply that their perceptions of motivation factors could be affected by their prior L2 learning experiences and the realisation of the differences between L1 and L2 culture. When they find a difference in their new learning environment and contextual factors arising from their original ideas or experiences, that difference may reflect their perception either positively as they favourably view it or negatively as they observe it unfavourably.

*RQ 2 How do the study abroad context and the learners' learning experiences affect the development of their 'ideal' or 'ought-to' selves?*

All the participants showed job-oriented (i.e. instrumental) extrinsic as well as intrinsic orientations for learning English which were more internalised through learning experiences in and out of the classroom during the study abroad program. The learning experience in the study abroad context appeared to support the learners with more internalisation of the future goal associated with instrumental orientation, and more development of Yashima's (2000) International Posture. However, the expressions they used in the logs and interviews did not fully conform to Dörnyei's definition of the L2

Self and thus, failed to provide clear evidence of the elaboration and the possession of vivid L2 selves.

Student 1 was interested in foreign countries while in Japan reflecting Gardner's (1988) integrative motive and Yashima's (2000) International Posture, while having a stable work-based instrumental orientation to find a job related to animal welfare. She mentioned in the logs from weeks four and five that:

Week 4 log:

*I had a firm intention to be able to communicate with foreigners in English duly even before I came to Australia, but that intention has come to be much stronger compared with week one.*

Week 5 log:

*I just wanted to be good at English before, but now I want to use English in my career very much as I found there are many chances to work abroad.*

Student 2 also had job-related instrumental orientation and interest in education in foreign countries. As he majored in mathematics, he had a clear focus on future employment, to become a math teacher, and his intention expanded through various learning experiences in the study abroad program. He wrote in the logs and answered in the final interview:

Week 2 log:

*I want to be a math teacher in Japan, but I'm also interested in working in foreign countries.*

Week 5 log:

*My future intention has not changed, but I want to work in foreign countries more.*

Interview 3 on week 5:

*I will be a math teacher in the future, so I learn English to learn mathematics more, and now I should learn English for future needs. It would be nice if I would teach in a foreign country. Japanese people are living and working here (in Australia – author added), and I thought it would be interesting to be like them.*

By experiencing the study-abroad program and life in Australia, he seemed to have developed International Posture and commenced the internalisation of an instrumental motive towards learning English. His original intention of becoming a math teacher was broadened to teach abroad, and better English proficiency could bring the dream closer. Student 3, on the other hand, had intrinsic motivation in learning English. He repeatedly mentioned in the logs that his objective in learning English was to develop excellent English communication skills. However, his English-learning orientation had not fully developed as either an 'Ideal' or 'Ought-to L2 Self' in Japan before the study-abroad program commenced. It seems to be a vaguer desire to use English within his area of study, international relations. He mentioned in the second interview that:

Interview 2 in week 3:

*As I see the news about foreign affairs and overseas events, I am eager to learn English more to understand the issues about global matters and incidents. I want to compare Japan and the rest of the world. I am more interested in these things.*

He experienced frequent communication problems in English with foreign customers when he had a part-time job at a café in Tokyo. One of the reasons for joining the study-abroad program was to acquire better English communication skills and develop more confidence in the use of English. Coming towards the end of the program, he seemed to have internalised the intrinsic and partly instrumental reasons for learning English as a stronger motivation to continue to study. He stated in the final interview:

Interview 3 in week 5:

*I could develop a better speaking skill, so I want to try it in the café in Japan. I will try to speak English to foreign customers, and if it doesn't work, I will find what is necessary to improve, and I will learn for that. If it works, then there is still something else I need to strengthen beside speaking. I will find it and learn about that.*

The above statement could be a hint at the development of a self-image. The student visualised the use of English in a real-life situation and focused on further study of English. This development of a self-image in terms of the learning and use of English was possibly due to the actual experiences of using English as a real means of communication, which he was not able to realise in Japan.

## **5 Discussion**

The current study provided some evidence that an English study-abroad program in Australia affected Japanese university students' motivation positively and helped them internalise and strengthen their instrumental orientation. The L2 learning experience in a

different cultural environment and using English as a real means of communication seemed to have helped the learners reshape their motivation to learn English. Since these students volunteered to participate in this study abroad program, they were expected to be motivated to learn English from the beginning of the program to a certain extent. The three students noted in the logs a firm intention to study English harder in the L2 learning context where they had to speak English to communicate with people around them consistently. The development of their motivation by participating in the program could mean that they were apt to view the benefit of the new learning environment at the beginning. They may have perceived the L2 environment and constant use of the L2 as the necessary stimulus to acquire functional communication skills in English. But at the same time, they also developed some anxiety in learning English in the given L2 context. In other words, on the one hand, they took this L2 learning context as the motivational driving force to enhance their learning of English; on the other hand, they perceived the L2 learning environment negatively as depicted in their logs and interviews.

The above findings suggest that there might not be a universal factor that consistently affected motivation either positively or negatively for each L2 learner. Instead, it could be subject to how each learner perceived the motivational element and that perception has its basis in the learner's prior learning experiences, and values attached to their L1 culture. That is, the language learning environment itself may not automatically motivate learners but "each learner's aspiration profile" (Kozaki & Ross, 2011, p. 21) should matter because each learner had different learning experiences, and learned to classify learning situations, tasks, and activities, in different ways (Julkunen, 2001, Sampson, 2016). The above argument can also be valid in the case of study abroad programs according to



Coleman (2004) who claimed that “in each individual case, biographical, affective, cognitive and circumstantial variables come into play with students’ previous language learning” (p. 583).

Regarding the previous learning experience that the students had in Japan, they did not have the full range of communication-oriented lessons available during the study abroad program. As the students stated, since the English classes in Japan were more teacher-oriented, the participants more favourably evaluated the new learning experience that involved a lot of learner and communication-oriented lessons. Besides, having learners from different L1 backgrounds in the same class, they seemed to have experienced a sort of culture shock in the lessons, in terms of the peer learners’ different classroom behaviours, such as interrupting the class and asking teachers questions. Based on their own behavioural and educational culture, and discovery of a different standard of acceptable practice in the new learning context, the participants positively evaluated the unique learning experiences, which then resulted in the development of their motivation. The positive effect from the close contact with different types of learning was well supported by Kozaki and Ross (2011) who stressed that “changes in an individual’s motivational state are thought to be the result of sustained exposure to and observation of peers, a process referred to as modelling” (p. 4). Gu et al. (2010), however, also stated that the tensions caused by encountering people from different cultural backgrounds and attempting to manage the differences could overwhelm L2 learners, especially in the initial stage. Given this, positive or negative perception of the cultural and contextual differences should depend on which the learners value more, adapting to the new standard of behaviour as the model or rejecting it and staying with the original value system. And

whether they view such issues positively or negatively is “depending on personal and situational factors and the learners’ interactions” (Gu et al., 2010, p. 11) with other members of the learning context and environment.

Another important factor in the development of vivid L2 selves could be the requirement of more prolonged exposure to stimulating learning experiences. The current study did not provide much evidence that the positive perception of the learning environment, actual involvement in learning and living through the study abroad program caused the learners’ elaboration and development of vivid L2 Selves. Frequently encountering opportunities to communicate only in English, the students seemed to have developed their original instrumental or intrinsic orientation to a greater extent. They gradually acquired a more detailed image of how English worked as a tool to better know and understand people from different L1 backgrounds and how English related to their future careers. All these could be a sign of the start of the internalisation of their selves.

The learners were intrinsically motivated as they liked English and were interested in foreign people, countries and culture. At the same time, they were also extrinsically (or instrumentally) driven as they had a good focus on what they wanted to be or needed to do as a profession, which required better communication skills in English, and hence increased study of English. However, to elaborate and possess a workable L2 Self as a motivator, either Ideal or Ought-to, they must create proximal guides themselves, setting concrete courses of action to attain their L2 Self (Dörnyei, 2009). Probably due to a lack of opportunities to know what was exactly needed to realise their future self since they had been learning English basically as a school subject only, their L2 Self was likely to

lack “an elaborated and vivid future image, and its perceived plausibility” (Dörnyei, 2009, p. 19). Dörnyei (2009) offered support by stating that quality knowledge and experience regarding the use of the TL is critical to attainment of the L2 Self. With new understandings of real use of English for learning and communication in the study-abroad program, the participants seemed to have started to develop a more concrete L2-self-image, but this relatively short-term, five-week program may not be sufficiently long to more fully possess the workable L2 Self. It may need more abundant and prolonged living and learning experiences with a full range of interactions closely related to their future goals of L2 learning for the development of a more genuine L2 Self as a motivator.

The above discussion, however, is based on only three participants from the same university. More participants and a more extended study program will be required to illustrate better how each learner perceives environmental and contextual factors, giving rise to potential trends among the learners concerning changes in their perceptions during a study abroad program.

## **6 Conclusion**

The current study investigated how Japanese university students' motivation to learn English fluctuated when they participated in a study abroad program in Australia. It also explored how L2 English learning experience affected the development of Dörnyei's (2009) L2 Self. The study found some evidence that the L2 learning environment and the rich learning experiences arising from communication with people from various L1 backgrounds positively affected their motivation. However, the learners varied in perceiving the changes in their motivation as well as the factors that influenced their

motivation positively or negatively. The perception could be affected by the learners' previous learning experiences, and their cultural values developed through their lives. In other words, one motivational factor may influence L2 learner motivation either positively or negatively, and thus, there may not be a single factor that worked only in one direction, always positively or negatively as a motivator. That is, learner perception could be a factor that needs further consideration in the discussion of motivational changes. Experiencing a study-abroad program could also be beneficial to help learners start internalising the L2 self-images. Foreign language classroom learners such as the participants in the current study may lack the opportunities to experience real TL communication, which could be one of the reasons they failed to develop more elaborative L2 selves through their learning of English. While a study-abroad program could be one of the ideal ways to provide them with access to the opportunities to attain a concrete L2 Self, the study evidenced that the full development of L2 Self may require much more extended and fruitful learning experiences than what they had during the current program. Although they were living with local host families, the quality and quantity of the communications they had should have been varied, and thus, they made little reference to their interactions with the family in the logs and in the interviews. While we did not explore the nature of those interactions, they may not have been sufficient to develop more elaborate self-images and given this, the duration and quality of learning experience both in and out of the classroom during study abroad should be targeted more in future L2 motivation research.

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## Appendix 1

### Weekly Learning Log

1. What is your current level of motivation? Indicate the level by number 1 to 7 with 1 as the weakest to 7 as the strongest.

\_\_\_\_\_

Extremely Weak	Very Weak	Weak	Moderate	Strong	Very Strong	Extremely Strong
1	2	3	4	5	6	7

2. Compared to the previous experience of learning English in Japan, did you find your motivation was strengthened, weakened or not changed?
3. What do you think is the reason why your motivation was changed or not changed?
4. In the current study of English in Australia, what do you think influences most your motivation to study English? (e.g. class atmosphere, teachers, classmates, teaching materials, learning tasks, learning environment such as campus or chances to use English for communication with local people).
5. What was your primary reason why you learned English in Japan? (e.g. compulsory subject, required for entrance examination, wanted to speak English fluently).
6. Please indicate any changes of the reason for learning English after you started the study of English in Australia.

## Appendix 2

### Interview Questions

Interview No. \_\_\_\_\_

1. Is there anything that affected your motivation to study English since the beginning of the course/the last interview? Yes? – Did it affect positively or negatively?
2. If your motivation was affected either positively or negatively, what do you think affected your motivation in that way?
3. Compared to the beginning of the course, has your motivation been strengthened, weakened or not changed much? Why so?
4. What do you think now is the major difference in learning English in Japan compared to learning English in Australia?
5. As you learn (have studied) English in Australia, what do you think is most motivating you now to study English? That could include teachers, classmates, class atmosphere, language program, materials used, support from school, pressure to use English for communication with other people, encouragement from family or friends in Japan.
6. Do you think your reason for learning English has changed since you started the study in Australia? How did it change?