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Country Stereotypes and L2 Motivation: A Study of French, German and Spanish Language Learners^{*}

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Larisa Nikitina (2015), Country Stereotypes and L2 Motivation: A Study of French, German and Spanish Language Learners. *Studies in Linguistics* 37, 483-509. The purposes of this study (N=80) were: 1) to explore stereotypes about a target language (TL) country and TL learning motivation among beginner learners of French, German, and Spanish in a big public university in Malaysia, and 2) to examine whether there were relationships between the country stereotypes and the students' motivation to learn a TL. To collect data, this study administered a questionnaire to the participants. To achieve the first research purpose, this study employed content analysis, which revealed that the respondents had diverse and overwhelmingly positive images about the TL countries. Interestingly, there were some differences in stereotype content across the three TL countries. For example, while technology-related images were prominent in the data collected from the learners of German, such references lacked among the

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images reported by the participants learning Spanish or French. As to the second research purpose, the findings of statistical analyses indicated that there were statistically significant and positive relationships between country stereotypes and TL learning motivation. The study concludes with discussing implications of the finding for L2 education. (**University of Malaya**)

Key Words: stereotypes, motivation, instrumental orientation, integrative orientation, foreign language learning, mixed-methods

1. Introduction

It has been suggested that stereotypes about a target language (TL) country, its culture and people play an important role in language learners' choice of a foreign language program and their language learning motivation (Byon, 2007; Dłaska, 2000). However, despite the availability of studies that investigated content of stereotypes about a TL country (e.g., Abrams, 2002; Drewelow 2013; Schulz & Haerle, 1995) there is a lack of empirical studies that explored relationships between these stereotypes and language learning motivation (or L2 motivation). The present study aims to address this gap.

The main objectives of this study are to explore stereotypes about a TL country held by foreign language learners and to examine whether there exists a relationship between these stereotypes and the learners' motivation to learn a foreign language. This study employs a mixed-methods approach in order to overcome methodological constraints inherent in the previous studies. For example, an overwhelming majority of studies on language learners' stereotypes are qualitative and they rely on data collected through open-ended questions. In contrast, research on L2 motivation is mostly quantitative; it employs closed-ended questions

to solicit data.

A mixed-methods approach adopted in this study allows linking and investigating stereotypes held by language learners and their L2 motivation in a single research project, which has not been done previously and which is the main contribution of this study. The present study was conducted among undergraduate students learning German, French and Spanish languages in a big public university in Malaysia. In line with this study's objectives, the following research questions were raised:

- (1) What stereotypes do Malaysian learners of French, German and Spanish languages have about the TL country?
- (2) Are these stereotypes positive or negative?
- (3) Is there a relationship between the students' stereotypes about the TL country and their motivation to learn the foreign language?

Kramersch (2000: 317) highlighted an interdisciplinary nature of applied linguistics and commented that research in this academic field is positioned at the "confluence of several disciplines". To concur with this observation, the present study is interdisciplinary: it employs approaches and methods developed in social psychology in order to address problems faced by applied linguists. This study's approach to L2 motivation is based on an influential model proposed by Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972) which attaches a particular importance to integrative orientation within L2 motivation and places emphasis on the socio-cultural and attitudinal aspects of language learning. Integrative orientation is defined here as a student's intention to learn a TL in order to gain a better understanding of the TL culture, native speakers of the target language and their ways of life. Instrumental orientation refers to language learner's perceptions of the TL utility and the intention to learn the TL for various practical purposes, such as future studies, travel or employment. Country

stereotypes – also referred to as “stereotypes” in this study – are defined as language learners’ images about a TL country, its culture and people.

2. Literature review

2.1. Studies on language learners’ stereotypes about a TL country

As Storme and Derakhshani (2002: 659) noted, studies that seek language learners’ images and descriptions about a TL country would “undoubtedly elicit stereotypes”. These stereotypes concern the TL country itself, its culture and native speakers of the TL. A number of studies in applied linguistics have explored images and stereotypes that students learning a foreign language have about a TL country (Allen, 2004; Chavez, 2009; Drewelow, 2013; Schulz & Haerle, 1995; Taylor, 1977). One of the earliest investigations was conducted by Taylor (1977) among learners of German in an American college. The participants in the study mentioned German food, the country’s history, geography and folklore. Several of the images concerned German people. In another study, Schulz and Haerle (1995) distinguished groups of images referring to German-made cars, the German language, German culture and people. More recently, Chavez (2009) explored German language learners’ stereotypes about the target language. One of interesting insights offered by her study was that though some students described German as a “harsh” or “hacking” language (p. 8), which are apparently negative traits, the learners themselves considered these characteristics as positive.

Allen (2004) conducted a study on country stereotype among learners of French in an American college. The respondents described the French as independent people who are proud of their culture and of all things French. Some students stated that the French possess a great *joie de vivre*. Overall, the images provided by the students were positive. By contrast, Drewelow (2013) discovered that some of the participants in her study had negative images about France, the French language and its

native speakers. For example, some students described French pronunciation as “annoying” (Drewelow, 2013: 164), French grammar as “odd/illogical” and the target language as “inefficient” (Drewelow, 2013: 165). Several respondents mentioned that the French were rude. However, in the process of learning French the students reevaluated their negative attitudes and misconceptions about the TL country and the French people (Drewelow 2013). A study by Vande Berg (1990) focused on stereotypes about the Spaniards held by American language learners of Spanish. The findings of her study revealed that the students’ images were limited to outdated perceptions about the TL speakers. For example, the respondents thought that all Spanish men are macho and that women in Spain customarily wear black dresses.

As this review of literature indicates, language learners’ perceptions about a TL country are shaped by popular and ubiquitous stereotypes which Kramsch (2014: 249) described as “tourist representations of foreign reality”. Nevertheless, language learners’ stereotypes provide valuable insights into their attitudes toward the TL country, its culture and people. This fact was noted by Storme and Derakhshani (2002: 659) who commented that “any activity requiring learners to report what they know about a target culture or to describe it will give us some insight into their attitudes towards it”.

Regrettably, very few of the available studies on language learners’ stereotypes have attempted to empirically assess attitudes embedded in these country images. Moreover, except for a few studies (e.g., Nikitina & Furuoka, 2013; Nikitina, Zuraidah, & Loh, 2014), such assessments were based on researchers’ common sense and intuition (e.g., Schulz & Haerle, 1995) rather than on respondents’ own evaluations of their country images. It should be noted that the importance of language-related attitudes and their influence on L2 motivation has been recognized in applied linguistics research, however, no attempts have been made thus far to link the attitudes embedded in language learners’ stereotypes about a TL country to their language learning motivation.

2.2. Instrumental and integrative orientations in L2 motivation

As Spolsky (2000: 159) noted, language learning motivation is “fertile area” in applied linguistics research. This is because motivation is recognized as one of the most important factors for a successful learning of a second or foreign language. Motivation is determined by the goals that people pursue. These goals are known as ‘motivational orientations’. Ryan and Deci (2000) stated that a motivational orientation “concerns the underlying attitudes and goals that give rise to action—that is, it concerns the why of actions” (54). There are two main motivational orientations—extrinsic and intrinsic. In educational settings, extrinsically motivated students engage in learning in order to obtain rewards and benefits that are extraneous to the subject matter. These may include getting good grades or receiving recognition from their peers. Intrinsically motivated individuals, by contrast, usually have a deep interest toward the subject; they engage in the learning process for pleasure and satisfaction that it brings (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

In the context of language pedagogy, orientations to learn a second or foreign language are known as ‘integrative orientation’ and ‘instrumental orientation’. These terms were introduced by Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert (1959). In line with approaches to motivation research in general psychology, instrumental and integrative orientations represent, in essence, “ultimate goals for achieving the more immediate goals of learning the second language” (Gardner, 1985: 11). It should be noted that though Gardner and Lambert (1959) differentiated integrative and instrumental orientations in their pioneering study for the purpose of measurement, the two orientations were not—and should not be—viewed as a dichotomy (Gardner, 1985).

A voluminous research on L2 motivation has been based on the socio-educational model proposed by Gardner and Lambert (see Dörnyei, 1998), which attests to the model’s solid theoretical foundation and its methodological appeal. Empirical studies on L2 motivation in the context

of foreign language education provided evidence that integrative orientation is an important component of a motivated language learning behavior (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Csizér, 2002). Researchers approached integrative orientation as a construct that comprises language learners' positive attitudes toward a TL country, its culture and native speakers (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Csizér & Kormos, 2009) and their desire to have a deeper understanding of the TL culture, art, literature and the native speakers' ways of life (Yang, 2003).

2.3. Research on L2 motivation in Malaysia

Studies on L2 motivation among learners of foreign languages in the Malaysian educational context offer empirical support to Gardner and Lambert's (1959, 1972) model of L2 motivation. For example, a qualitative study by Pogadaev (2007) among 40 Russian language learners in the University of Malaya distinguished the presence of integrative orientation in the students' L2 motivational inclinations. The researcher found that 27.5% of the respondents were learning Russian because of their interest in the TL culture and language itself. At the same time, some of the participants were instrumentally-oriented because they had registered for the language program for various pragmatic reasons, such as to fulfil graduation requirements (12.5 %).

A qualitative study by Tan, Ooi and Hairul (2012) among learners of Mandarin in an unspecified Malaysian public university distinguished four major motivational inclinations, namely, "instrumental motivation", "intrinsic motivation", "friendship" and "influence by others". Though the researchers did not discern "integrative orientation" among the motivational factors, the category "intrinsic motivation" and some themes grouped under the label "friendship" (e.g., "to be closer with the Chinese") were aligned with this construct. In a large scale questionnaire survey, Ainol and Isarji (2009) explored L2 motivation among 531 students learning Arabic, Japanese, Mandarin, Korean, Thai, French, Italian,

German and Spanish in two big public universities. The researchers used the terms “intrinsic” and “extrinsic” motivation instead of the “integrative” and “instrumental” orientation. They found that the students’ L2 motivation incorporated both intrinsic and extrinsic components. As this review of literature indicates, motivational inclinations of Malaysian learners of foreign languages aligned with Gardner and Lambert’s (1959, 1972) model of L2 motivation even when the researchers did not use the terms ‘integrative orientation’ and ‘instrumental orientation’ (e.g., Ainol & Isarji, 2009; Tan, Ooi & Hairul, 2012).

2.4. Linking country stereotypes and L2 motivation: Methodological issues

Though there have been calls to explore relationships between language learners’ stereotypes about a TL country and their motivation to learn a target language (e.g., Byon, 2007) no such empirical studies have been carried out thus far. This could be due to methodological constraints. On the one hand, data in the studies on language learners’ stereotypes were usually obtained through open-ended questions (e.g., Schulz & Haerle, 1995; Taylor, 1977). This approach allowed researchers to capture language learners’ most salient representations of a TL country; however, the measurement of attitudes embedded in the country images were not included among the objectives of these studies. Therefore, no quantitative assessment of these attitudes has been conducted, which precluded a methodological possibility of linking language learners’ attitudes to their L2 motivation.

On the other hand, data on L2 motivation are customarily obtained through sets of closed-ended questions. Limitations inherent in this approach were noted in several studies (see Kormos & Csizér, 2007; Spolsky, 2000). For example, Kormos and Csizér (2007) commented that in the context of foreign language learning—as opposed to the learning of a second language—students often lack direct contacts with the TL

culture and native speakers. As a result, the students' first-hand knowledge about the TL country is limited and, therefore, cannot be effectively measured by the closed-ended questions prepared by the investigator.

In order to solve this dilemma, researchers included in their instruments some additional variables and scales. For example, Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) incorporated in their study the variables "vitality of the L2 community", "attitudes toward L2 speakers/community" and "cultural interest". As the researchers explained, the variable "vitality of the L2 community" assessed "the perceived importance and wealth of the L2 communities in question", while the variable "cultural interest" measured the students' "appreciation of cultural products associated with the particular L2" (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005: 21-22). Importantly, Csizér and Dörnyei found that the variable "attitudes toward L2 speakers" had been a direct antecedent of integrative orientation. In another study, Csizér and Kormos (2008) introduced the variable "language-related attitudes" to assess language learners' attitudes toward native speakers of the TL and their interest in the target culture. They discovered that this variable had a direct impact on the respondents' L2 motivation. In essence, the additional variables introduced by Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) and Csizér and Kormos (2008) aimed to measure the respondents' attitudes toward and their opinions about the TL country, its culture and native speakers. It is important to note this fact because, as this study proceeds to argue, attitudes held by language learners can be employed for establishing links between their stereotypes about a TL country and L2 motivation.

2.5. Attitude measures as a link between country stereotypes and L2 motivation

Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972) incorporated language learners' attitudes into their empirical analysis of L2 motivation via the notion of integrative orientation. Gardner (1985: 9) defined an attitude as "an

evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual's beliefs or opinions about the referent". Due to the important role that attitudes play in the socio-educational model of L2 motivation, issues concerning attitude measurement are of prime importance. As Spolsky (2000: 160) pointed out, the question of how to explore language learners' attitudes and opinions "is far from trivial". There is also a realization that approaches where attitude assessment is hinged on closed-ended questions preclude an accurate evaluation of the students' endogenous language-related attitudes (Kormos & Csizér, 2007; Spolsky, 2000).

In social psychology research this methodological problem has been solved by using free-response approaches to data collection. Respondents are typically asked to write their own images, beliefs or opinions about the object of a study and then they are instructed to assign a favourability rating to each of their answers. This approach yields answers that are salient and pertinent to the respondents; in addition, the numerical evaluations provided by the participants serve as good "proximal indicators" of attitudes (Spencer-Rodgers, 2001). A similar approach in applied linguistics research was adopted by Nikitina and Furuoka (2013); however, the researchers did not explore the link between the language learners' attitudes and their L2 motivation.

3. Method

3.1. Participants and educational setting

There were 80 participants (N=80) in this study. Among them, 23 students (n=23) were learning French, 26 (n=26) were learning German and 31 students (n=31) were taking Spanish classes. The participants were in the first semester of their language program. Their age ranged between 20 and 26 years old (M = 21.9; SD = 1.032). There were more female (n=46 or 57.5%) than male (n=34 or 42.5%) students among the

respondents, which reflected the gender ratio of undergraduate student population in Malaysian public universities (Kapoor & Au, 2011).

3.2. Data collection and research instrument

Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected and analyzed in this mixed-methods study. An abbreviated version of the questionnaire can be found in Appendix. Qualitative data were obtained from the students' answers to the open-ended question that sought their images about the TL country. The participants were then instructed to give a rating to each of the images in their lists.

Besides the open-ended question the research instrument contained ten closed-ended questions: five of them assessed integrative orientation and another five measured instrumental orientations. A high score on any of these measures reflected a high relevance of a particular orientation (i.e., instrumental or integrative) in a student's L2 motivation.

In addition to the open- and closed-ended questions, the instrument contained two temperature-type scales to assess the respondents' general attitudes toward the TL country and people, respectively. In these temperature-type scales, 0 °C indicated an "extremely unfavourable" attitude toward a TL country and people, while 100 °C denoted an "extremely favourable" disposition. The mean values of these attitudes were used as the variables "Attitude to TL country" and "Attitude to TL speakers" in the statistical analysis.

3.3. Data analysis

3.3.1. Analysis of the open-ended question

To answer the first research question this study performed content analysis of the qualitative data. In other words, the data were organized into categories of similar entities which were induced directly from the

data (Julien, 2008; Ryan & Bernard, 2003). Some of the students' representations of a TL country were idiosyncratic: they had been mentioned only once and could not form a unified whole with other images. These representations were grouped under the label "Others".

3.3.2. Analysis of stereotype favourability

In order to determine whether the students' stereotypes about a TL country were positive or negative and to answer research question 2, the favourability ratings given by the respondents to their images were used to:

- (1) calculate the average favourability or category mean valence (*CMV*) of each category of images about a TL country. The following formula was employed for this purpose:

$$CMV_j = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{F_j} V_{ji}}{F_j}$$

where CMV_j is the mean valence of the category j ; V_{ji} is the valence ratings given by student i to image j in this category; F_j is the number of images in the category.

- (2) compute the overall favourability or composite mean valence (*CompMV*) of the images about each TL country based on the formula:

$$CompMV = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^M V_{ji}}{M}$$

where V_{ji} is the favourability rating given to image j by respondent i , M is the total number of images about a particular TL country provided

by all students in the cohort.

- (3) assess the individual student list's mean valence (*IndMV*) or the average favourability of the images in each of the students' inventories using the following formula:

$$IndMV_i = \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{N_i} V_{ji}}{N_i}$$

where $IndMV_i$ is the mean valence value of all images in the list provided by individual student i ; V_{ji} is the valence rating given to image j by this student i , and N_i is the total number of images provided by student i . All calculations were performed using Microsoft Excel software.

3.3.3. Statistical analysis of the closed-ended questions

Statistical analysis of the data involved two stages. Firstly, reliability and validity of the research instrument were established. Reliability of the scales was assessed by computing reliability coefficient (Cronbach's alpha). Validity was established by the exploratory factor analysis (EFA), which also helped to determine whether the proposed constructs, namely, integrative orientation and instrumental orientation, were clearly represented in the actual data collected from the participants.

In the second stage, the Pearson's correlation test explored the existence, direction and strength of associations between the language learners' stereotypes, their attitudes toward a TL country and people, and their L2 motivation. All statistical analyses in this study were performed with the aid of the IBM SPSS Statistics V21.0 computer software.

4. Findings

4.1. Finding on language learners' country stereotypes

4.1.1. Stereotypes about France, their content and favourability

In response to the open-ended question, the 23 students learning French generated 190 images about the TL country. During the qualitative phase of the study, these representations were separated into 11 categories not including the category "Others" (n=6). Only one category, namely, "High cost of living" had a negative mean valence (CMV=-1.000). The findings indicated that the respondents associated France with the Eiffel Tower, Paris, technological advancement and beautiful scenery. There were also several references to the French language. It is interesting to note that the images "love" and "romance" were very prominent among the students' answers; they even formed their own category. Also ubiquitous were the descriptors "romantic" (e.g., "romantic place", "romantic country") and "beautiful" (e.g. "beautiful architecture", "beautiful country"). In addition, the students mentioned such 'trademarks' of France as its food and fashion industry. Taken together, these images formed a picturesque portrayal of the country that is ubiquitous in movies and tourist brochures. In other words, the images provided by the respondents in this study aligned with globally held stereotypes about France.

The findings also revealed that the students had highly positive attitudes toward France. This was reflected in the mean valence values of the categories of images, which were predominantly positive, and also in the overall favourability of the images about the TL country (CompMV=1.395). The only negative category was "High cost of living" (CMV=-1.000).

4.1.2. Stereotypes about Germany, their content and favourability

The 26 learners of German provided 197 images about the TL country as their answers to the open-ended question. These images formed 14 categories, not including the category “Others”. Only one category, namely, “History”, had a negative mean valence value (CMV= -1.200). As the analysis of the qualitative data revealed, the stereotypes about Germany were diverse. The students provided images referring to German-made cars, technology and industry. Some images related to German food (e.g., “Currywurst”), traditional and popular culture (e.g., “Oktoberfest”, pop song “99 Luftballons”), famous cities and tourist sites. The respondents also offered several characteristics of the target language (e.g., “powerful language”) and the perceived qualities of its speakers (e.g., “disciplined people”). Several images related to the lifestyle in Germany, the country’s history and its prominent international status (e.g., “important country in Europe”). The findings also revealed that the students perceived Germany in a positive light: all but one category of images (i.e., “history”, CMV=-1.200) had positive mean valences. The overall favourability of the images about Germany was sufficiently high (CompMV=1.198).

4.1.3. Stereotypes about Spain, their content and favourability

The 31 participants who were learning Spanish supplied 152 images about the TL country. During content analysis these images were separated into 12 categories, excluding the category “Others” (n=9). The students gave descriptions of the TL country (e.g., “beautiful country”) and its landscape (e.g., “beautiful beaches”). Also, there were references to Spanish traditional and popular culture (“siesta”, “classical guitar”) and art (“architecture”). The respondents provided images about the TL language (e.g., “international language”) and its speakers (e.g., “beautiful and handsome people”). They also mentioned several cities and popular

tourist sites (e.g., “Ibiza”) and shared their emotional response toward the TL country (“a great country”). The language learners had highly favourable perceptions about Spain: all of the categories of images were positive and the composite mean valence value of the images about Spain was high (CompMV=1.342).

4.2. Findings of statistical analysis

Preliminary tests that are normally required before statistical analyses are implemented indicated that the data on L2 motivational orientations were appropriate for the exploratory factor analysis (EFA). Thus, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) coefficient was within the meritorious range at .806, and the Bartlett’s test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(45) = 340.399, p < .01$). The EFA involved the principal component analysis and the Varimax rotation method with the Kaiser normalization.

The findings of the EFA revealed the existence of two latent dimensions in the data on L2 motivation, which fully corresponded to the initially proposed constructs of integrative and instrumental orientations (see Table 1). There had been no multiple loadings of the questionnaire items and all items retained their original placing into one of the two motivational dimensions. Thus, the five questionnaire items measuring instrumental orientation were retained in Factor 1 (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .843$) while the five items to assess integrative orientation formed Factor 2 (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .791$).

In the following step, the Pearson’s correlation test examined whether there existed associations between the five variables in this study, namely, (1) stereotypes about the TL country; (2) integrative orientation, (3) instrumental orientation, (4) general attitudes toward the TL country, and (5) general attitudes toward the TL speakers.

Table 1. Factors, variables and questionnaire items on students' L2 motivational orientations

Variables and questions	Factors	
	1	2
<i>Instrumental motivation (INST)</i>		
Knowledge of the [TL] will help me when I travel abroad.*	.868	
Knowledge of the [TL] will be useful for my future career.	.864	
Knowledge of the [TL] will increase my job opportunities.	.775	
Knowledge of the [TL] can be useful for my further studies, such as at the Master's or PhD level.	.694	
Proficiency in the [TL] can bring me some financial benefits (e.g., translations, etc.).	.624	
<i>Integrative motivation (INTEG)</i>		
Studying this language is important for me because it will enable me to appreciate the [TL] art and literature.		.836
Studying this language is important because it will enable me to better understand the way of life in the [TL] country.		.744
I decided to learn the [TL] language so that I can get to know its speakers better.		.730
I decided to study this language because I am interested in the [TL] popular culture.		.657
I decided to learn this language in order to better understand the [TL] people way of life.		.571
<i>Cronbach's α</i>	.843	.791
<i>Percentage of variance explained</i>	43.19	17.02

Notes. Only the loadings above .50 are shown. * A relevant TL was stated in the questionnaires (see Appendix) instead of the abbreviation [TL].

The results of the Pearson's correlation test are presented in Table 2. They show that all five variables were positively related to each other, though not all of these relationships were statistically significant. First of all—and this is one of the most important findings of this study—the analysis revealed that there existed a positive and statistically significant relationship between the students' country stereotypes and their integrative orientation ($r = .240, p < .05$). At the same time, the association

between the stereotypes and instrumental orientation, though positive, was not statistically significant.

Table 2. Correlations among stereotypes about the TL country, motivational orientations and attitudes

Variable	1	2	3	4	5
1. Stereotypes	–				
2. Integrative orientation	.240*	–			
3. Instrumental orientation	.116	.451**	–		
4. Attitudes to TL country	.069	.281*	.102	–	
5. Attitudes to TL speakers	.184	.329**	.204	.564**	–

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$.

Concerning the motivational orientations, it is worthy to note that there existed a positive and statistically significant association between integrative orientation and the students' general attitudes toward the TL country ($r = .281$, $p < .05$) and native speakers ($r = .329$, $p < .01$).

In addition, a positive and statistically significant correlation was found to exist between the two motivational orientations ($r = .451$, $p < .01$). The findings also indicated the existence of a statistically significant relationship ($r = .564$, $p < .01$) between the students' attitudes toward the TL country and the TL speakers.

5. Discussion of the findings

As the findings of content analysis in the qualitative strand of this study revealed, images about each TL country provided by the students related to various aspects of the country's reality, including its culture, people, food, landscape and climate and the target language itself. There were some differences in stereotype content across the three TL countries. For example, while technology-related images were prominent in the data collected from the learners of German, such references lacked among the images reported by the students learning Spanish and French. At the same time, the German language learners provided no art-related images

(e.g., classical music, architecture) and very few of their images concerned popular culture. By contrast, art- and culture-related images featured prominently in the data collected among the students learning French and Spanish.

Overall, the findings indicated that the Malaysian students' representations about the three TL countries aligned with the most popular and universally held stereotypes about France, Germany and Spain. These results support conclusions put forward in the previous studies (see Drewelow, 2013; Schulz & Haerle, 1995; Vande Berg, 1990). More importantly, the capacity for triangulation inherent to the mixed methods research designs (see Cresswell, 2003; Teddlie & Tashakkory, 2009) has enabled the researcher to make empirically-based conclusions regarding favourability of the language learners' stereotypes. Thus, the main difference between the results reported in the current study and some of the earlier investigations (e.g., Drewelow, 2013) is that the Malaysian students tended to view the TL countries in a very positive light as reflected in their own evaluations of the images about the TL countries.

Regarding the findings from the quantitative strand, it should be noted that despite a fact that some of the previous studies had included various attitudinal variables in the statistical analysis of L2 motivation (e.g., Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Csizér & Kormos, 2008) none of them had incorporated stereotypes about the TL country as a variable. Therefore, it is problematic to make meaningful and extensive comparisons between the results of the present study and the findings reported in available research literature. However, some of the variables in the previous studies share similar to stereotypes aspects. For example, Csizér and Dörnyei (2005) included in their model of L2 motivation the variables "vitality of the L2 community", "attitudes toward L2 speakers/community" and "cultural interest", which in essence measured the respondents' beliefs, opinions and attitudes toward the TL country, its people and culture. Csizér and Dörnyei found that the variable "attitudes toward L2 speakers"

was a direct antecedent of integrative orientation. This result aligns with the finding of the present study concerning the relationship between stereotypes and L2 motivation. Thus, the Malaysian language learners' stereotypes about the TL country had a positive and statistically significant relationship with integrative orientation.

In another scholarly inquiry, Csizér and Kormos (2008) included the variable "language-related attitudes", which measured the language learners' attitudes toward the TL speakers and their interest in the target culture. They found that this variable had a direct impact on the respondents' L2 motivation, which is similar to the present study's finding that the stereotypes about the TL country were positively and significantly correlated with integrative orientation. It also should be noted that the presence of a positive and statistically significant relationship between the two motivational orientations detected in the current study provided empirical support to Gardner's (1985) caution not to view integrative and instrumental orientations in terms of a dichotomy but rather consider them as a dyad.

6. Conclusion

The present study has focused on two constructs that have attracted a considerable interest of applied linguists and foreign language educators, namely, country stereotypes and L2 motivation. This study primarily aimed to introduce a methodological approach that would enable researchers to link stereotypes and L2 motivation in a single empirical study. This has not been done before despite the calls to explore relationships between language learners' stereotypes about a TL country and their L2 motivation (see Byon, 2007).

Besides methodological usefulness this study has implications for the teaching of foreign languages. Exploring content of language learners' stereotypes about a TL country, its culture and people offers language educators an efficient means to gain information about students' cognitive

representations of—as well as their attitudes toward—the TL country. This knowledge can be used for developing pedagogical strategies that would address language learners' educational needs more effectively, especially as far as the teaching of the cultural component of a language program is concerned. For example, misconceptions about a TL culture reflected in language learners' stereotypes may give language educators additional insights as to which aspects of life in the TL country should be addressed in the classroom.

To conclude, Gardner and Lambert (1972) argued that language learners would benefit more from studying a foreign language if they can develop an integrative outlook toward the target language country, its culture and speakers. For this reason, developing culturally rich curriculum would not only addresses language learners' educational needs but also motivate the students and lead to better learning outcomes, both linguistic and non-linguistic.

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Appendix

Questionnaire on Country Stereotypes and L2 Motivation¹

This questionnaire explores students' opinion about Italy as a country and their experiences learning the Italian language. This is not an exam, and there are no correct or wrong answers. Your sincere personal opinion is the correct answer. Your answers will remain confidential. Thank you!

PART I

1. What images or mental pictures come to your mind when you hear the words "Italy" or "Italian"? Write as many words or short phrases as you need in the space below.

Please give marks to the images you have provided as the answers to Question 1. **Each image** must be given **one mark** ranging from **-2 to +2**. The marks should be based on your **personal attitude** toward the image, such as:

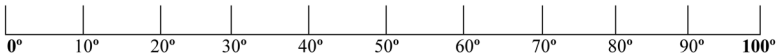
-2 = very negative image -1 = negative image
 +2 = very positive image +1 = positive image
 0 = neither positive nor negative image

2. Mark your general attitude toward **Italy** as **a country** on the 'thermometer' below. Zero degrees (0°) indicates a very negative attitude; 100 degrees (100°) indicates a very positive attitude.



3. Mark your general attitude toward the **Italian people** on the 'thermometer' below. Zero degrees (0°) indicates a very negative attitude; 100 degrees (100°) indicates a very positive attitude.

¹ This is an abbreviated version of the questionnaire.

**PART II**

Circle (O) or tick (✓) your answer to each of the following questions.

The scale is:

1 = Strongly disagree (SD);

2 = Disagree (D);

3 = Neither disagree nor agree (N);

4 = Agree (A);

5 = Strongly agree (SA)

Questions	SD	D	N	A	SA
I decided to study this language because I am interested in Italian popular culture	1	2	3	4	5
Studying this language is important because it will enable me to better understand the way of life in Italy.	1	2	3	4	5
Knowledge of the Italian language will help me when I travel abroad.	1	2	3	4	5
Knowledge of the Italian language can be useful for my further studies, such as at the Master's or PhD level.	1	2	3	4	5
I decided to learn the Italian language so that I can get to know its speakers better.	1	2	3	4	5
Studying this language is important for me because it will enable me to appreciate Italian art and literature.	1	2	3	4	5
Knowledge of the Italian language will increase my job opportunities.	1	2	3	4	5
Proficiency in the Italian language can bring me some financial benefits (e.g., translations, etc.).	1	2	3	4	5
I decided to learn this language in order to better understand the Italian people way of life.	1	2	3	4	5
Knowledge of the Italian language will be useful for my future career.	1	2	3	4	5

PART III. Please provide the following information about yourself.

1. Gender: Male Female

2. Age: _____ years

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