

Experience Language, Understanding Culture: Expatriate Adjustment on Mainland Malta

by Anita Vukovic
University at Albany, State University of New York

S U M M A R Y

"There is a saying that moving is second to death from a stress point of view...[it] requires the willingness to revise one's identity." (Kohonen 22)
In previous studies of expatriation, the issue of language acquisition and its correlation to increased cultural integration is a well-studied one. My questions in this paper are in regards to how learning Maltese has or has not affected the experiences of individuals who have moved to Malta within the past 20 years. Whether these experiences are diagnostic of "cultural shock" (via Oberg and others), and what role language acquisition has played in these experiences, are subsequent questions my paper attempts to address. The information I gathered during my twenty days of fieldwork in Malta, during which I met with and interviewed ten non-Maltese-speaking individuals who hailed primarily from the United States and Europe, corroborates with what previous expatriation studies and theories have already posited: that not only understanding and acquiring but also enjoying the native language (and all associated bodily language acts) of an area to which one has moved greatly increases one's success, happiness, and probability of remaining in that area. Because English is spoken as a nearly-universal second language by most Maltese residents and tourists, my paper ultimately investigates how the dimensions of expatriate experiences and expectations change in a nation like Malta where the need for language acquisition might be perceived as less necessary for basic cultural navigation.

A R T I C L E I N F O

Key words

Expatriate, language acquisition, integration, identification, bicultural, Maltese, English, culture shock

How to refer to this article

Vukovic A., Experience Language, Understanding Culture: Expatriate Adjustment on Mainland Malta, 2013, Omertaa, Journal for Applied Anthropology, <http://www.omertaa.org/archive/omertaa0068.pdf>

Methodology

The data for this paper was collected over twenty days on the islands of Malta and Gozo in July of 2011. The most significant portion of my research, however, came not from the Maltese but rather from a number of expatriates living on the main island of Malta with whom I grew acquainted during my stay. These individuals were always explicitly aware of the nature of my project, as most had been informed about it by Margaret¹ (with whom I made my first contact after stumbling upon her blog) when she graciously offered to introduce me. During the time I spent with this group of individuals, I collected information not only through direct conversation but also through observation of the interactions that took place between them, and how these interactions reflected their experiences – and the attitudes informed by these experiences – since moving to Malta.

A portion of my data was also acquired through an email survey² I sent to Margaret, who forwarded it around to her friends, about a month after returning to New York. I received only three replies: two from individuals I had met in Sliema, Malta and one from a woman with whom I had had no prior contact. Despite its low response rate, the survey nonetheless became an important part of my project. My background research into expatriation and identity theory after returning to the U.S. revealed that I had not gathered enough information concerning expatriate language acquisition in Malta during my stay there. Thus I devised the survey in hopes of not only clarifying how respondents felt about the importance of language in general (particularly English and Maltese), but also of identifying the various coping mechanisms, if any, that my acquaintances were employing in their adjustments to living in Malta.

Review of the Literature

In addressing these questions, it is important to begin with the word and concept of "expatriate" itself. In its simplest definition, "expatriate" refers to a person who lives outside his/her native country; this is the definition with which I will concern myself hereon. Within this definition, the underlying mechanisms of both the word and its manifestation are immediately clear as ones that function in and through a looping thread of binary oppositions: functioning *in* multiple real-time, experiential contexts that are concerned primarily with dividing boundaries; and functioning *through* the symbolic representation of a word that embodies these dividing boundaries. For the word "outside" always and already implies the ghost of its opposite, that of the *inside*; the word "their" always and already indicates the shadowy presence of an(O)ther from the they to which "their" refers; just as the phrase "native country" always and already creates that country which is not native, which is foreign – an enigma – and potentially hostile. By its very suggestion of the existence of certain boundaries (i.e. those of national borders), and the compulsory transgression of them, the word "expatriate" always and already constructs a reality for its subjects as one that is marked by such boundaries and the oppositions that straddle them. Thus the "expatriate" is constituted through a feedback loop as both a word and an identity that inform and are informed by the highly segmented experiences of individuals in flux.

Prior research on expatriation, although largely aimed at improving assignment success rates among individuals working abroad, has provided several critical insights into the processes of expatriation and cultural adjustment.

As I discussed, the very experience of expatriation is problematic because it is first and foremost a *process* that *always* and *ability* involves multiple levels of boundary-(re)making and transgressing. However, these boundaries extend beyond those of nations to include those of individual and group/social identities. Here it is critical to note that identity is both an individual and a social construction that, as the product of an internal-external dialectic of social identification, encompasses our shared sociocultural meanings and behaviors, learned assumptions about the world, and modes of knowing ourselves from the view of society and the Other (Kohonen 25). Expatriation, by thrusting an individual into an arena in which he/she shares no meanings or assumptions with the host nationals, throws his/her sense of identity and, more importantly, his/her *ability* to self-identify into a seeming state of peril (Richards 566). Richards characterizes this crisis as the breakdown of an individual's "thinking as usual" (i.e. his/her tacit social knowledge of the world) following his/her realization of its sudden inadequacy:

"What is taken for granted by the native is problematic for the stranger, what is routine, unquestioned or unreflected upon by the in-group is, potentially at least, in every case new and potentially threatening [for the out-group]." (Richards 559).

It is this perceived loss of identity that constitutes what Kalervo Oberg calls "cultural shock," or "the anxiety that results from losing all our familiar signs and symbols of social intercourse" (Oberg 142). Following the initial honeymoon stage characterized by an individual's fascination with the new culture and people comes what Oberg calls the "crisis" period that is distinguished "by a hostile and aggressive attitude towards the host country" (Oberg 143). It is also in this stage that the expatriate will begin to develop anxieties and mild to severe paranoia of isolation and/or exclusion (Richards 554). However, it is important to note that this isolation is a *perceived* isolation that arises from the dissatisfaction of one's social needs (Mendenhall and Odou 43). In trying to understand his/her new hostility, the expatriate also locates the source of his/her problem outside of him/herself and attributes his/her discomfort to problems with his/her environment and/or the "strange behavior" of the Others (Richards 560). Thus a strict boundary is immediately and already erected between the expatriate and his/her host country and its residents, ultimately reflecting on the individual's inability to not only understand, predict, and control the behavior of his/her host nationals, but to thereby construct his/her own conceptions of him/herself – his/her *identity* – as well (Richards 555).

Emotional survival in one's new host country therefore becomes a question of cultural flexibility: of one's ability to question, break down, and rebuild one's worldview to incorporate that of the new country's – to embody more than one set of cultural allegiances, norms, meanings, and behaviors. Such an expansion of one's cultural consciousness has been characterized as developing a bicultural identity, or, "the ability to have dual-consciousness, dual-allegiance, and the overall skills to be accepting and accepted in various cultural settings" (Moore 5). Cultural identity is therefore a *feeling of acceptance* that one acquires through shared meanings and histories with other members of a culture, and a critical aspect for the successful expatriate (Moore 5). Thus, well-adjusted expatriates must have the ability to be nonjudgemental when interacting with and interpreting the behavior of host nationals (Mendenhall and Oddou 43).

True cultural adjustment, however, is marked not only by one's acceptance of the host nation, culture, and its members, but by one's ability to *enjoy* these aspects as well. This can happen only with a complete grasp of all social cues, which in turn can happen only through effective use and understanding of the host language (Ober 143). Previous research on international assignment and success has shown that the principal precondition for "cognitive transition from strangeness to familiarity" is developing the ability to effectively *communicate*, i.e. to effectively partake in meaningful dialogue, deal with misunderstandings and different communication styles, and initiate interaction (Moore 6). This is because effective communication with the host nationals is what determines the expatriate's ability to form the interpersonal relationships and social networks that are so critical to successful cognitive adjustment, for it is these relationships that will subsequently develop the expatriate's ability to empathize with and understand the feelings of the host nationals. It is important to note, however, that an individual's willingness and confidence to use the host language is more important than his/her actual fluency in the language in socio-cultural adjustment (Mendenhall and Odou 42).

By integrating oneself into meaningful social networks through meaningful social interactions with host nationals, the expatriate begins to construct the shared meanings, histories, and identities that will ultimately rebuild – or more appropriately, *expand* (via a new bicultural identity) – the sense of identity which seemed so threatened in the first place (Moore 7). By creating these social networks, as mentioned before, the expatriate also develops the ability to understand and empathize with the feelings of the host nationals which subsequently helps the expatriate predict

how they will behave toward him/her in the future. This reduces the initial uncertainty the expatriate felt when interacting with the host nationals by allowing for a clearer transmission of information between them (Mendenhall and Odou 42). Moore sees this as the act of building a "commonality derived through shared identity" insofar as identity is constituted through social interaction and communication. Thus, by knowing the host language, the expatriate is able to know both the host nationals and him/herself in the context of the host culture, effectively putting him/her on the path to culture shock recovery (Ober 145).

Malta: July 5th-25th, 2011

The group of individuals I spent most of my time with in Malta was a diverse one. I first met Margaret after stumbling across her blog and requesting to meet her for an informal interview at a cafe near her apartment in Sliema. We spent nearly four hours together, during which I learned that she hailed from Hudson, New York, a small town but forty minutes from my apartment in Albany, and had developed a large network of friends who were relatively new to Malta as well. One week later, I joined her for one of the beachside meet-ups in Sliema she enjoys every other Wednesday with her friends, after which I returned with her and her partner Allan to their apartment to spend the night. The night was warm and chicken sandwiches and beer flowed freely as I talked with the individuals who showed, some for less than an hour and others until 11pm to christen the last can of Stella Artois. Below is a brief bio of those I got to know that night and throughout the rest of my stay in Malta.

Margaret: Margaret, 58, moved to Malta from the U.S. in October of 2008. She currently shares an apartment in Sliema with her partner Allan, who she met nine years ago through an online dating service. Despite having only lived together for three to four weeks at a time during vacations, the couple moved to Malta to live together. Divorced once before 10 years ago, Margaret, a native of the small town Hudson, New York, left behind two daughters (25 and 30 years old) in the U.S. She holds a sociology degree from SUNY Binghamton.

Faced with health insurance costs reaching nearly \$900 a month and rising job insecurity and lay-offs in the U.S., Margaret decided to move internationally for her health, happiness, and financial security. When I asked why she chose Malta, she identified its temperate climate, relative affordability, and the extensive use of English among its residents as the largest factors in her decision; she also said that she has always felt a spiritual connection to the Mediterranean. "It was either Malta or Mexico," as she told me. Although she is happy for now, Margaret is not sure

whether she will stay in Malta for the rest of her life. One thing is for certain, though: she won't be returning to the U.S. unless it is to visit her daughters during the four weeks minimum vacation she gets a year at her job as a teacher for English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Despite this, she says she remains loyal to the U.S., which is why she rejects the label of expatriate insofar as she sees the term as implying an *ex-patriot*.

Margaret is also the author of a blog (which, for privacy reasons, will remain unnamed) documenting her experiences as an American living in Malta. She says she has met many people – especially fellow expatriates – through it, and even got a friend a job after she wrote a post about her friend facing the possibility of leaving Malta due to prolonged unemployment.

As mentioned above, she works as a teacher for EFL, employing what she calls "alternative teaching methods" in her classroom. For example, she likes to bring newspapers and restaurant menus into class to engage students with reading in everyday situations. Her teaching is motivated by memories of the ineffective methods by which she was taught French in high school, which she says did not place a large enough emphasis on everyday interactions. Thus it is clear that she places a large, if at least superficial, importance on knowledge of different languages.

Margaret's international experience is small. Before moving to Malta with Allan, she had only travelled outside of the U.S. to Canada, France, and England, and she has not explored any of continental Europe since her move three years ago outside of visiting Allan's family in Germany.

My main observation about Margaret was that she enjoyed talking and enjoyed my presence; she even told me that I was the first American in Malta she had enjoyed talking to as the others she had met were "pretentious and weird." She questioned my romantic life and freely offered advice, and once took Natalie, a friend of mine, and me out for "girl's night" for ice cream before returning to her apartment to watch Animal Planet. Her excitement to have me, and later Natalie's, company might be attributed to the fact that both I and my friend are near her daughters' ages and are both natives of upstate New York.

Allan: Allan, Margaret's partner of nine years, is in his 60's and, although originally British, grew up and spent most of his time in Germany. He is currently retired from working in the sales and marketing department of a German international pharmaceutical company. Similarly to Margaret, Allan identified Malta's climate and large English-speaking population as its main attractions for moving. He also said that he enjoys living in Malta and has made more friends there, including Maltese individuals and other expatriates, than he did in Germany. During a

walk we took around Sliema bay, I noticed that he knew most of the vendors along the way and stopped frequently to "catch up" with them. Allan is an avid walker and, in addition to his daily strolls along the beach, participates in a local walking club through which he says he has met many friends.

Ellen: Ellen, also German and a mutual friend of Margaret and Allan's, appears to be in her 50's and has lived in Malta for two years. Ellen identified Malta's warm climate as its main attraction and came across as incredulous that Natalie and I were staying in Gozo rather than the main island. Her many interesting thoughts and opinions will be discussed at a greater length later on.

Nancy: Nancy, also German and a friend of Margaret's, is in her 40's and has lived in Malta for two years. Despite her background in social work in Germany, she works as a graphic artist in Malta. She is the individual who was offered a job through Margaret's blog, although she confided in me that she is now unhappy with this job and currently looking for another.

Ned: Ned is in his 30's and hails from Italy where he worked for Hewlett Packard. He moved to Malta three years ago after he was offered a job at IBM. He is also a fan of Malta's warm climate and was equally incredulous that Natalie and I were staying in Gozo, which he proclaimed a "good place for vacation, but not to live."

Erica: Erica is German and in her 30's, and has lived in Malta for one year; she is also one of the individuals with whom I had the least interaction. When I asked her to elaborate on what she meant by "getting stuck" in Malta, she responded with something about jobs but did not go further and I did not press the matter. Although she had met Margaret only once before the night I met her, she seemed instantly integrated into the group dynamic and engaged comfortably in conversation with the others present; it even seemed that Margaret was making a special effort to acquaint herself better with Erica, as I often noticed them talking and laughing privately between themselves.

John: John, who was in his 20's, had come from Spain to Malta to learn English one month before I met him. He was staying with Erica, who had brought him to the gathering, and, although he did not know much English, was eager to participate whenever someone questioned him directly. When I asked him what he thought about Malta, he said he was enjoying his time and hoped to stay another month or so before returning to Spain. He also told me about his two-week visit to New York City, which he called "the greatest city in the world" insofar as everyone he met there had been extremely helpful in helping him speak and understand English.

Dave and Leah: Dave and Leah were two of my favorite

individuals and also two of the three that answered my email survey. Originally from the U.K. and married for 28 years, they had been living in Qawra on the main island for nine months when I met them. Both are retired and knew Margaret through her blog. They are also members of many other expatriate forums and conduct extensive research on a country before moving there, which is why they visited Malta twice, once in September of 2009 and again in April of 2010, before deciding to make the move. They also have a boat they like to take out on the sea.

Leah is 63 and divorced with one child who is now 43; through Dave, she also has a 42-year-old stepson and a stepdaughter who is 44. She was born in the U.K. but, due to her father's service in the Royal Air Force, lived in numerous other countries as a child. As an adult, she lived in the U.S., Bahamas, and Panama prior to living to Malta; she says she has not lived in the U.K. for about thirty years. She holds a Bachelor in Education and a Master's of Psychology, and had been retired for two months when I met her.

Among their primary reasons for moving to Malta, Leah cited the healthcare and pension benefits she and Dave receive as citizens of the EU. Malta's large English-speaking population, range of easily accessible cultural events (i.e. theatre, concerts, and museums), temperate climate, proximity to Europe, and low crime levels also factored into their decision. When I asked her whether they would be staying in Malta for the foreseeable future, she responded lightheartedly, "Our home is whatever country we're in!" It is precisely because she sees herself as a world traveller, and not an individual with a particular national identity, that she also does not conceive of herself as an "expatriate."

Leah says she has about four Maltese friends with whom she is not very close nor spends much of her time. On the other hand, she says she has eight other friends, who are also expatriates, with whom she is "reasonably close" and who she sees sometimes as often as once or twice a week and other times as infrequently as once or twice a month.

Dave is nearly 71 and divorced with two kids, age 42 and 44, who still live in England. He has been married to Leah for 28 years. He worked in construction before retiring five years ago and lived, with Leah, in Panama for four years, Georgia (U.S.) for five, Florida (U.S.) for ten, California (U.S.) for eight, and the Bahamas for two before moving to Malta. He has also travelled to most European countries and Belize.

Similarly to Leah, he emphasized the large use of English among residents, the benefits of being members of the EU, the national culture, and the lack of serious crime throughout the country as their primary reasons for

moving to Malta. He also said that being close to the sea and able to sail were very important to him. Although he and Leah might move on to a different country, Dave said they will never go back to the U.K. to live.

He has several Maltese friends he knows on a strictly casual basis and a handful of friends who are also expatriates, one with whom he is very close and the others who he meets infrequently for a drink and/or a meal.

Jim: Jim was one of the most interesting people I got to meet in Malta who showed as much interest in me and my story as I showed in him and his story. In his 60's and originally from Wales, he has lived in Malta for five years before which he visited the country once for a holiday. As a young man, he also visited much of China, continental Europe, and the U.S.

He has a son and two grown grandchildren back in the U.K. who, despite the distance, he claims to see as much as he did when he was living in Wales.

Similarly to the others, Jim chose Malta because he enjoyed the warm climate and wanted to live somewhere he could continue to speak English. He also said that Malta's slower way of life has provided a good place for him to calm down and enjoy his retirement. He has made several good Maltese friends who, he observed, have all left Malta to either work or live abroad before returning once again; his many other interesting observations will be discussed shortly.

Jenna: Jenna was the only friend of Margaret and Allan's who, although I did not meet in person, responded to my email survey. She is 60, divorced with two grown sons, and originally from the U.K., although she lived for 26 years in the U.S. before moving to Sliema about a year and a half ago, where she currently works as a freelance online writer and editor. Because she is half German, she spent most of her childhood traveling between the U.K. and Germany; her ex-husband's job also took them to the U.S. where they raised their sons. She has visited most of Europe, parts of Asia, and Central America for recreational travel.

Jenna studied foreign languages in college and worked as a qigong and yoga instructor, German language tutor, office manager, bilingual German secretary, and a Chinese and Ayurveda holistic medicine practitioner before coming to Malta. Bored with the U.S. and seeking some place warmer to live, she moved to Malta having never visited the country nor met anyone who lived there. Similarly to Leah, Jenna sees herself as a "global citizen" or even a "child of the universe" whose home is wherever she finds herself; she sees herself staying in Malta for as long as she is happy, having made many friends who are both Maltese and fellow expatriates.

Summary: At a glance, it is easy to see that the reasons these eleven individuals cited as the biggest factors in

| | Weather | English | SSS | "Culture" | Job | Significant Previous Int'l Travel | Other |
|----------|---------|---------|-----|-----------|---------|-----------------------------------|--|
| Margaret | X | X | X | | | | *The connection she feels to the Mediterranean |
| Allan | X | X | | | RETIRED | | |
| Ellen | | | | | ? | | |
| Nancy | | | | | ? | | |
| Ned | X | | | | X | | |
| Erica | | | | | X | | |
| John | | X | | | | | *To study English |
| Dave | | X | X | | RETIRED | X | *Med. benefits and pension *Safety *Sea & sailing |
| Leah | | X | X | | RETIRED | X | *Med. benefits and pension *Safety *Accessibility to Europe and US |
| Jenna | X | | | | | X | *Tired of living in US |
| Jim | X | X | | | RETIRED | X | *Good place for retirement |

Table 1.

their decisions to move to Malta fall into similar categories [table 1].

The chart also indicates that only two of the above individuals moved to Malta because of an interest in the national culture. These two individuals also make up 50% those who are retired and 50% of those who have spent significant amounts of their lives living abroad. One exception to this pattern might be John, who, although he came to Malta to study the English-speaking aspect of its culture, is difficult to place in the "Culture" category insofar as English is a specific subset of the culture. At the collective level, the top reasons for moving to Malta include its warm climate and large English-speaking population. The patterns evidenced by this chart will be discussed and analyzed shortly.

Language and the Group Dynamic

None within the group could speak Maltese except Ellen, who admitted to knowing only "half Maltese," or knowing it very poorly. When Ned and Nancy overheard this part of our conversation, they proceeded to tease her, albeit in a good-hearted manner. "Come on, tell the truth, you know Maltese," they laughed, at which she insisted for some time that she did not, before relenting a few minutes later that she did, in fact, know a handful of Maltese words and phrases. If this confrontation seems somewhat contradictory, I was shocked by Ellen's assertion a few minutes later that, "Maltese is the second most useless language in the world." When I asked what was the first, she replied, "Eskimo," at which the others nearby erupted into laughter once again; sensing my confusion, she explained that because it is only the people of Malta who speak Maltese, the language is useless in any other context, thus making it the second most useless language in the world after Eskimo. Here, Ellen's effort to identify with the group mentality of disliking Maltese – of essentially affirming solidarity in their inability to speak Maltese and their ability to speak English – seemed to contradict directly her admission of knowing a working amount of Maltese which, insofar as learning a language requires practice, i.e. a dedication of time and effort, seemed furthermore to imply that she *did*, in fact, see some value in the language, regardless of what context she used it in (i.e. professional, recreational, etc). This dynamic, I believe, provides a clear example of what many social theorists identify as the innate disposition toward the construction of a *positive social identity* insofar as, "(a) People are motivated to maintain a positive self-concept, (b) the self-concept derives largely from group identification, and (c) people establish positive social identities by favorably comparing their in-group against

an out-group" (Padilla and Perez 43). Here, the in-group might be considered the group of expatriates discussed above and the out-group might be considered the Maltese-speaking Maltese population at large.

Margaret was among the few who identified at least somewhat positively with the Maltese language. Although she did not speak nor understand it when I met her, she remembered her desire to learn it when she arrived on the island in 2008; shortly after her arrival, however, she decided there was no need to learn Maltese insofar as everyone she interacted with was familiar with English. Here, both Margaret and Ellen's perceptions of learning Maltese as unnecessary and thus a waste of time, are, I believe, critical factors in their experiences of acculturation and one which will be returned to shortly. In addition, Leah knew a few Maltese words "to be polite," as she put it, whereas Dave did not know any for the reason that he "is too old and [his] brain will not hold much," and Jenna, although she did not know Maltese, was starting to learn Italian because she found it more useful (which might be an interesting area for further study among expatriates in Malta).

The place of language in the group dynamic was a striking one that transgressed the mere Maltese-English dichotomy both in terms of how these (and other) languages functioned between individuals and what sort of relationships they signaled between these individuals. As none within the group knew or even desired to speak Maltese, English became the primary tool for building meaningful and personal relationships amongst themselves insofar as all individuals were *comfortable* with conversing in English; indeed, everyone in the group, excluding John, knew English either as a first language or one they had learned from a young age through socialization both in the private sphere (i.e. at home, with friends, etc) and in the public sphere (i.e. in school, government, and other institutionalized settings). With several members of the group having either been born or raised in Germany, it was also not uncommon to see up to three of these individuals break off in side conversations held primarily in German. Although in other situations such code-switching from the language of general use might be seen as an exclusionary action, in this context it seemed to signify more a feeling of comfort than anything else insofar as: 1) nearly 40% of the group was German and thus would have had no difficulty understanding what was being said; 2) it occurred only when many side conversations were taking place at once so that the German conversation(s) never predominated over the others; and 3) because the German individuals moved easily, frequently, and randomly between both English and German conversations, it did not appear that they were

actively forming a separate group within the larger group dynamic. Thus it seemed that speaking in German was a mechanism for cultivating intimacy and familiarity in an otherwise unfamiliar environment.

We can therefore see that for these individuals, language (both English and German) functioned as a mechanism for social formation and organization insofar as it promoted a sense of solidarity at the level of conversation itself (i.e. the ability to communicate with one another) as well as the level of what this conversation propagated between them (i.e. shared meanings and understandings). What is most important here is that based on their observation of the large number of Maltese residents who speak English, as well as their ability to find individuals with similar language backgrounds, these individuals also saw no need to learn Maltese. It is precisely because of their shared perception of learning Maltese as unnecessary for cultural and personal survival that I believe their experiences in Malta have been largely negative (see below), as they have not acquired the tools necessary for readjusting their cultural identities.

The importance of learning the native Maltese language in a country where English is an official language is one that I believe reflects on larger processes of globalization in which English is becoming a nearly universal second language and processes of cultural shock and adjustment are being contested. For although Maltese and English are both official languages of Malta, Maltese remains the *national* language and thus the language of cultural (and national) solidarity among its Maltese citizens. As Camilleri discusses in her study of code-switching in Maltese classrooms, English and Maltese are vastly different in *how* they signify in the linguistic economy of Malta: what areas of interaction, institutional and otherwise, they are associated with, and what "symbolic capital," to borrow from Pierre Bourdieu, they carry. Although the Maltese individuals I met during my stay could speak both Maltese and English and were ready to engage in English at any point, Camilleri claims that English's primary importance and attractiveness lies in its great influence in public institutions, policy-making, and the tourism industry, one of Malta's largest sources of revenue. Thus, whereas English is used as a formal, foreign, and technical language to create social *distance*, Maltese is used to signal familiarity and social *intimacy* in the negotiation of social relations (Camilleri 101). Furthermore, following centuries of suppression of Maltese as a "commoner's" tongue, there have been movements in recent decades among the English-speaking elite of Malta for the promotion and preservation of the Maltese language as an emblem of national heritage and history (Camilleri 92).

Adverse Expatriation Experiences and the Importance of Group Networking

Thus, although a knowledge of English equips one to navigate successfully the physical and basic social terrains of Malta (for example, asking directions, talking to government officials, etc), there remains an underlying *cultural* need for a knowledge of the Maltese language if one wishes to penetrate the social sphere to the extent that one actually develops feelings of shared history, familiarity, and ultimately identity. The expatriates I met – with neither an ability nor desire to learn and use Maltese, which they falsely perceived as useless – were confronted with what they considered to be negative experiences in their interactions with the Maltese and, in an effort to preserve a sense of individual identity, constructed a social network amongst themselves made meaningful through their collective ability to speak English as well as their mutual identification as foreign bodies in a strange land. In this section, I will discuss a handful of the negative experiences these individuals had as well as how the social network they created functioned at both collective and individual levels.

To start, during one of my conversations with Margaret, she mentioned having developed a feeling of "disliking the natives" in reference to her feelings of animosity toward and superiority over the Maltese people and their language. Such feelings and her awareness of them, I believe, is reflective of the "crisis" stage Oberg identifies in the phenomenon of cultural shock during which the expatriate in question develops feelings of hostility toward his/her host nation and its people, culture, and national language. In Margaret's case, these feelings developed after her initial "honeymoon phase" – a direct quote from her although it perfectly imitates Oberg's diagnosis of cultural shock as starting with a honeymoon stage – during which her fascination with and admiration of the country and its people suppressed all otherwise antipathetic emotions that soon (within the first six months, as she told me) replaced all initial feelings of comfort and affinity. She does, however, remain critically aware of her antagonistic feelings toward the Maltese, as she confessed to feeling guilt about having them and confused as to their source. Although I could not offer her advice at the time, in retrospect it would appear that she was experiencing an anxiety typical to many expatriates. Yet even in the face of her self-proclaimed guilt at having these feelings she often aired her grievances against the Maltese openly with me, sometimes in public areas. In addition to her conviction of the Maltese as being "stupid" and "ugly," and her anger at being mistaken for a Maltese "native," she also complained

about the noise pollution from the students, tourists, construction, and fireworks during the *festas*, as well as the pollution and dirtiness of the country in general, even though Sliema is one of the wealthier tourist areas on the island.

She also encountered unexpected difficulties at her job at EFL upon arriving in Malta. Contrary to her expectation that being a U.S. citizen would help her in her new profession, Margaret faced what she perceived as a prejudice against her U.S. citizenship; this perception is also diagnostic of the crisis stage of culture shock which, according to Richards, is characterized by a certain paranoia of exclusion and isolation. Although she has advanced in rank at EFL since she began working there, she recalled feeling like an outcast among her colleagues for not exhibiting the submissive and soft-spoken demeanor she considers to be typical of "traditional" Maltese women in the workplace³. In direct contrast to this traditional Maltese female disposition stands what she identified as her American mannerisms: those of increased aggression and assertiveness and a tendency to question authority in order to clarify, rather than undermine, orders – characteristics, she told me, that were misinterpreted by her Maltese colleagues as pomposity and a disregard for her superiors. Margaret's difficulties here in understanding, adapting to, and internalizing cultural differences in the workplace are also highly reminiscent of Richards' analysis of culture shock as originating from an individual's sudden inability to carry out his/her social functions effectively. In this context it would seem that Margaret saw her identity as an American working woman being threatened insofar as the work ethic and mannerisms that had once helped her in the workplace were suddenly rendered useless and even detrimental to her success; thus, her social role as a "working woman" was thrown into peril, which subsequently inspired her suspicions of prejudice and feelings of exclusion.

It is highly possible that Margaret's problems in the workplace and outside of it might be attributed to her inability to speak and understand Maltese. Without an understanding of Maltese, she was unable to understand the subtler social cues embedded in what she perceived as traditional demeanors and dispositions transmitted by people interacting directly with her as well as people interacting around her. On the other hand, it is also possible that she was employing body language, gesticulations, tones, etc., that were unfamiliar (unfamiliar often being associated with the potentially hostile) to the Maltese thus making her actions and articulations seem aggressive when, in fact, they were not. Unable to understand Maltese, the national language of intimacy and familiarity, Margaret was unable to understand what makes the Maltese the

Maltese – how they relate to and conceive of one another verbally, spatially, and temporally – and was thus unable to empathize with the actions and "demeanors" of the Maltese individuals she found herself surrounded by.

Although I spent most of my time with Margaret, it was apparent that many of her friends were experiencing similar feelings of animosity and exclusion as many of the conversations I overheard and participated in served as safe spaces for people to discuss and identify their problems in Malta. Much of the conversation centered not only on the perceived uselessness of the Maltese language (see the section *Language and the Group Dynamic*), but also on everyday matters these individuals saw as nuisances, such as noise pollution, drunk students at the "f***** clubs," as Ellen referred to them, and the overwhelming presence of tourists year-round; this last grievance is particularly interesting for, insofar as this group of expatriates might be considered tourists by "true" Maltese residents, their annoyance with travelers and tourists in Malta would seem to be an assertion of identification with the Maltese population and culture. It was thus also immediately apparent that they were engaged in actively locating their problems outside of themselves in a manner typical of individuals experiencing culture shock, as discussed by Richards.

Ellen appeared to be the most aggrieved of all the individuals I met. In response to Margaret's comment about the honeymoon phase, Ellen asked, seemingly incredulously, "What 'honeymoon phase?'" She also complained frequently about the number of tourists and openly teased Natalie and me for staying in Gozo, and later told us we would enjoy the "f***** clubs" simply because we were two young American college females. She was a loud and opinionated individual who made it clear she thought the Maltese people, culture, and language were somewhat of a joke.

One of Ned's biggest complaints was that his colleagues did not speak English around him, which he perceived as an effort to intentionally ignore him. Upon hearing Ned discussing this, Jim joined in saying that Ned's coworkers were "refusing" to speak English and thus excluding him from the workplace dynamic. Together, Ned and Jim's assertions not only illustrated the importance of their group network as a *support* network, but also further emphasized the importance of language in all of their interactions, experiences, and perceptions in and of Malta. Ned's feelings of exclusion due to his inability to understand and communicate in Maltese provide an excellent example for my paper insofar as despite his ability to speak English, one of the country's official languages, his inability to speak Maltese, the *national* language of cultural solidarity, played

a direct role in his perceptions of social exclusion because it denied him access to the more intimate domains of social networking that inform and are informed by histories and assumptions shared between cultural agents. Faced with a sudden inability to communicate and identify socially with the Maltese, Ned – and, by extension, the other individuals in the group – created a social network with a makeshift "heritage" (i.e. that of hailing from another country) with which they increasingly identified as they continued to experience increasing social difficulties.

The formation of this community was also largely based on their collective knowledge and *comfort of using* English which became not only the main linguistic mode of communication between them, but one of the main sources of group solidarity as well. Their use of and familiarity with English – an official language of Malta used to create social distances – represented the social and linguistic spaces they occupied in Malta, including both what they were (i.e. "foreign," unfamiliar, and English-speaking) and what they were *not* (i.e. local, "natives," familiar, and Maltese-speaking). The direct relationship between the positions they occupied in the social *and* linguistic economies of Malta and the fact that they provided the ultimate glue for their group, as it fostered a means by which they could once again understand the social cues, functions, assumptions, histories, jokes, proverbs, etc. – essentially, the *conversational currency* – of others in an otherwise alien environment. The collective use of English thus served as a way of re-forging individual identities by creating a group identity – a sense of belonging and social identification – which they were stripped of upon moving to Malta.

The group also functioned as a support network in which these individuals could vent their frustrations and receive advice and/or sympathy and encouragement back from their friends. What was most interesting – and unexpected – was how rather than using one another to diffuse the anger and frustrations they felt, they often seemed to incite each other's feelings of animosity by building upon their frustrations, creating somewhat of a "snowball effect." Although I was surprised to see this happening in many of their conversations, such behavior is not as atypical as it initially seemed to me, insofar as it recalls Richards' assertion that, "Many expatriates spend much of their social (and some work) time talking about their hosts, particularly telling stories about them. The discomfort and discontents of their life provoke many expatriates to provide jokes, stories and myths which help to ensure their psychological survival. These stories seem to perform social functions associated with attempting to reduce anxiety" (Richards 560). This quote throws a new light on

my observations in which we can draw three important conclusions about the nature of this group of individuals: first, that they were all experiencing an inherently social anxiety about their new roles, or perceived lack thereof, in Malta; second, that they were all still in the crisis stage of culture shock; and third, that the group existed insofar as it ensured the psychological survival of its members through the development of personal relationships that provided the mechanisms necessary for their positive social and individual identification. It was a support group ultimately based on *successful* interpersonal communication not only in the sense that discussing one's problems with others helps alleviate stress, but also in the sense that this communication was conducted in a language associated with comfort and familiarity through which they could reaffirm the identities that had been compromised by their negative experiences and unsuccessful social interactions with the Maltese.

Positive Expatriation Experiences and the Importance of Prior International Experience

In contrast to the negative experiences discussed above, a few of the individuals I met seemed relatively happy in Malta. What was interesting about these individuals was that all four of them had spent a significantly greater time traveling and/or living abroad than the others. This is highly reminiscent of Mendenhall and Odou's "perceptual dimension" of expatriate acculturation, or the ability to understand the reasons for the host nationals' behaviors – essentially, to correctly identify the attributions of these behaviors, which subsequently helps the expatriate predict how the host nationals will behave towards him/her in the future (Mendenhall and Odou 42). The ability to correctly predict reciprocal behavior helps reduce the feelings of social anxiety that underly the experience of culture shock itself. This ability, however, is ultimately contingent on how well the expatriate can integrate him/herself into the host culture, to adopt its patterns of "thinking as usual" in creating his/her new bicultural identity. According to other expatriation studies, previous experiences similar to that of expatriation are linked to enhanced cultural adjustment and increased cognitive adaptation because they equip individuals with the emotional maturity and confidence necessary in dealing with strangers in a strange land (Moore 16).

The four individuals who were the happiest in Malta and had had the most experience living and/or working abroad were Dave, Leah, Jim, and Jenna, although here I will focus

exclusively on the first three as I never had any personal, face-to-face interaction with Jenna. Dave and Leah made several interesting, in-depth observations about the expatriation experience in their responses to my email survey. For example, in response to question 25, "Do you ever feel that the Maltese intentionally include or exclude you in social settings?," Dave replied, "Not intentionally. Sometimes it is hard for them not to break into their native tongue." His answer here indicates both the degree to which he was able to remain nonjudgmental in his interactions with the Maltese, as well as the prevalence of the use of the Maltese language by its speakers. In response to question 26, "Do you ever feel that the Maltese intentionally trick you or tell you false information at your expense in social settings?," both replied that they had never experienced such feelings or suspicions. In response to question 35, "Do you find it easy to adjust to Maltese manners and morals? Why or why not?...", Dave responded that, "Being an easy going person, I find that I fit in very well in any country and accept that country's way of life;" Leah responded with, "Do not have a problem with that. As I believe that if you are living in 'someone else's' country, you really do not have a right to tell them how to behave." From my observations of and interactions with them, and from their answers to these questions, it would seem that they were (at least thus far) not feeling the social paranoia characteristic to culture shock. Rather, they exhibited the ability to be nonjudgmental when interpreting the behavior of the Maltese that Mendenhall and Odou identify as characteristic of better adjusted expatriates. Furthermore, although they were not familiar with the Maltese language, this did not seem to hinder the success of their interactions with the Maltese. This might be attributed to their extensive experience living in foreign countries where they were forced to interact with people who spoke different languages.

Another consistently positive and self-reflective individual with significant international experience was Jim. Indeed, during one of our first conversations, he made a very specific observation about the "slowness" of life in Malta that spoke volumes about his increased capacity for cultural adjustment. Although this decrease in tempo first irked him, he slowly grew to appreciate and even enjoy it after realizing that "*you're* the one who has to slow down your pace of life, that way you won't get frustrated" (emphasis mine); what Jim was essentially talking about was expanding one's definition of life to include those of one's host nation and culture. Now, he said, he enjoys his new daily schedule, which includes waking up and drinking his coffee outside to observe passersby before going to the gym where he plays and teaches squash. He has grown to

appreciate the way of life in Malta as, having retired before moving there, he finds it allows him to "kind of calm down and enjoy life."

However, perhaps his most insightful observation was one that hinted at feelings of paranoia and exclusion as well as cultural acceptance. Because he considers himself a friendly and talkative fellow who makes friends easily, Jim said he was surprised when, after moving to Malta, he had difficulty making new friends. For example, he said he began to realize that Maltese shop and restaurant owners he met and developed friendships with rarely invited him to dinners or family gatherings. Although he was first troubled by this, and wondered what was wrong with the Maltese, he slowly came to realize that Maltese social life is predominantly family-oriented – that, even if he was friends with the Maltese, he would never be "friends" with them in the way he conceived of friendship insofar as he was not considered family. Regarding the several close Maltese friends he said he has made, he observed that these individuals had all left Malta to either work or live abroad at some point in their lives; he hypothesized that because these experiences had made them aware of the "world outside Malta," they became more open to friendship with foreigners and sympathetic to fellow expatriates.

Throughout my interactions with Jim, it seemed he had learned to empathize with the Maltese culture and consider his experiences from a more objective point of view. His insights, I believe, as well as those provided by Dave and Leah, relate back to Moore, Mendenhall, and Odou's observation that expatriates with prior experience abroad are better at culturally adjusting insofar as they have developed the cognitive and emotional maturity necessary to remaining nonjudgmental and non-evaluative when interacting with host nationals. Although none of these three individuals could speak Maltese, they possessed a greater ability for coping with the transition and the emotions and anxieties that accompany such monumental transitions. In the end, they were the least likely to partake in the verbal bashing of the Maltese language and culture that the others engaged in, and the most likely to maintain a certain degree of self-reflectivity and acceptance in their interactions with the Maltese.

Conclusion

Upon my return to New York and after conducting background research into expatriation studies and identity theory, I realized that my data and paper suffered from several basic limitations. The first, and perhaps most critical, was my own inability to speak and understand Maltese. Because of this, I had concentrated mostly on

the English-speaking expatriates and did not receive any substantial insights into how the Maltese conceive of expatriation and cultural integration that would have provided a valuable context into which I could have situated my observations and conclusions. Thus, although all anthropology always suffers from bias and oversight, I am particularly hesitant in my understanding of the differences between how English and Maltese signify in Malta. I also spoke mostly with expatriates who had not lived in Malta for substantial periods of time; Jim, who has lived in Malta for five years, was the individual who had spent the longest time there. It would be interesting to see how expatriates who have lived in Malta for more than five years conceive of themselves as individuals and specifically as individuals living in Malta, i.e. what social adjustments they have made and whether or not they have learned Maltese and how either learning or not learning Maltese has impacted their experiences, attitudes, and senses of identity.

If I ever returned to Malta to conduct follow-up research for this paper, I would make more of an effort to talk to the Maltese about how they feel about expatriation and language use in general. More specifically, I would aim to understand how they feel about English speakers moving to Malta, whether they regard these individuals as nuisances or not, and whether they enjoy interacting with these individuals or not. I would also like to gain a better understanding of how the Maltese conceive of the uses and associations of both Maltese and English, in which situations they would be most likely to use either language, and how well their ideas about Maltese and English align with Camilleri's conclusions insofar as Camilleri's article played an integral role in my report.

In the end, although my observations corroborated with previous expatriation studies' conclusions about cultural shock and adjustment and the role of language acquisition in each, I was most interested in how the expatriates' perception of learning Maltese as unnecessary to adjusting to Maltese life, insofar as both English and Maltese are used predominantly throughout Malta, affected their experiences. For, as I believe was overwhelmingly apparent, learning Maltese was especially necessary for successful cultural adjustment in such a linguistic economy. However, I do not believe this phenomenon to be unique to Malta but rather one that is becoming increasingly common across the world as processes of globalization continue to reinforce the role of English as a nearly universal second language. Thus it would be interesting to study how the larger economic, political, and social dynamics of international relations are affecting smaller, more individual processes of migration, expatriation, and cultural identification – essentially, how

modern world systems are changing the dialectic between culture and identity and whether conceptions of "identity" itself are changing from monocultural to bicultural and beyond.

Appendix A: E-mail Survey Questions and Answers

1. What is your name?

D: Dave

L: Leah

J: Jenna

2. What is your gender?

D: Male

L: Female

J: Jenna

3. What is your age?

D: 70 years, 9 months.

L: 63

J: 60

4. What is your relationship status? (I.e. In a relationship, married w/ three kids, just married, divorced, etc...if possible, please specify how long you have been married, how old your children are, etc., as this will help me get an idea of the demographics here).

D: Married with 2 kids 42 and 44 living in England.

Current wife 28 years, married in Las Vegas, previous wife 21 years married in England.

L: Divorced. One child, male, age 43. Re-Married for 28 years. Two step-children, male 43, female 45

J: Divorced, two grown sons

5. What did you study or specialize in in school, if applicable?

D: Catholic private school in England. Not too good at academic subjects but liked sports.

L: Yes, Teacher, Bachelor in Education, Master's Psychology

J: Languages

6. What is your home country? (If you were born in one country but spent most of your life in another, please include that if you can).

D: Malta - 1 year. Panama, Central America - 4 years, Georgia, USA - 5 years, Florida, USA - 10 years, California, USA - 8 years, Bahamas - 2 years.

L: Born in Britain. Lived in too numerous countries as child (father in RAF). As adult, lived USA, Bahamas, Panama, Malta

J: Born and raised in England, lived last 26 years in the USA

7. Have you lived or traveled abroad before?

D: Yes. Most European countries, USA, Bahamas, Belize.

L: Yes, see above

J: Yes

8. If you have, where have you traveled/lived abroad and for what reasons and for how long? (This can be very brief, i.e., "England, job promotion, 5 yrs." If you enjoy traveling but don't spend significant amounts of time in each place, i.e. no longer than 6 months, you can just write something like, "I traveled across Europe and North America in my 20s").

D: USA working. Bahamas working. Belize working.

Europe working. Panama retired. Malta retired.

L: See above

J: Travelled and lived between U.K. and Germany when younger (I am half German), ex's job took us to States, where my sons were raised, visited most of Europe, parts of Asia, Central America for pleasure

9. What is your current job occupation in Malta? (If retired, write "N/A" and how long you have been retired for).

D: N/A retired for 5 years.

L: N/A 2 months

J: Freelance online writer/editor

10. Is this the same occupation that you held before coming to Malta? (If NO, please write what you practiced beforehand. If you would like to give a brief job history, that would be very helpful to me as well).

D: N/A

L: N/A

J: No, previously qigong and yoga instructor, also Chinese and Ayurveda holistic medicine. Other jobs - homemaker, German tutor, office manager, bi-lingual German secretary

11. In which city or town in Malta do you live? (If you live in Gozo, please specify that!).

D: Qawra

L: Qawra

J: Sliema

12. How long have you lived in Malta for?

D: 1 year

L: 9 months

J: One and a half years

13. Did you ever visit or stay in Malta before you moved there? (If YES, please write when, for how long, and why. Remember you can keep it very brief if you'd like to!).

D: Yes. 1 month 9/2009 1 month 04/2010

*L: Yes. Three weeks September 2009 - to check it out for possible move. One month April 2010 - again to check the country out and confirm that we wanted to move.
J: No, moved here on my own, knowing no one and nothing!!*

14. For what reason(s) did you decide to move to Malta?
*D: Language, British/American citizen. Culture. Sea and sailing. Lack of serious crime (as in Central American countries).
L: We are British citizens. Benefit from medical and pensions. Most people speak English. Lots of culture, theatre, concerts, museums, things to do. Country is generally safe for people (females) to be out on own. Mostly the weather is not too bad. Easy access to Europe and not too difficult to get to USA.
J: Got tired of living in the States, friend researched on line for warm countries and suggested Malta. I thought why not, and here I am!*

15. Do you see yourself staying in Malta, or going back home eventually? Why or why not? (Remember you can be as brief as you want to!)
*D: Staying here for the foreseeable future. May move on. Never going back to England.
L: Staying in Malta. Our home is whatever country we're in!
J: Home for me is wherever I am at that particular time and space. I will be here as long as I am happy and it feels right to be here.*

16. Can you speak Maltese? (If yes, please indicate your proficiency level).
*D: No
L: No
J: No*

17. If you answered YES to question 16, when/how did you learn it, and for how long were you learning it? (i.e. did you learn it before you came to Malta through job training? or an online class for personal interest that lasted 6 months? etc...)
*D: N/A
L: N/A
J: N/A*

18. If you answered NO to question 15, do you feel any desire to learn Maltese at some point? Why or why not?
*D: No. Too old and brain will not hold much.
L: No – maybe a few words to be polite
J: I am about to start learning Italian first, as I think it is more useful*

19. Is English your native language?
*D: Yes
L: Yes
J: Yes*

20. If you answered NO to question 19, what is your native language, and when did you learn English and why?
*D: N/A
L: N/A
J: N/A*

21. Did you know anyone in Malta before moving here? (If YES, what is your relationship to them and how long have you know them? Are they Maltese or expatriates as well? How did they influence your decision in moving here?)
*D: Yes. Ilene and a couple of others through the internet. We research as much as possible before visiting a country.
L: Yes. Friend, expat, known for nearly two years before came. Gave a lot of useful information. No, did not influence decision.
J: No*

22. Do you have any Maltese friends?
*If YES, please approximate how many you have, how close you are with the majority of them, and how much time you spend with them. If there is any funny or interesting anecdote you'd like to share about how you met them, etc, please feel free to include it!
*If NO, is there any particular reason why? I.e. you feel that you don't get along with the Maltese in general, or you don't find yourself in situations where there is the opportunity to get to know them? I realize this is a sensitive area; please remember that your answers will remain 100% anonymous, and that if you are completely uncomfortable answering this question, you don't have to!!!
*D: Yes but more on a casual basis.
L: Yes. 4. Not really close and do not spend a whole lot of time with them.
J: Yes, many acquaintances, a handful of friends, two or three I know I could call in an emergency. I find Maltese friendly in general. Being on my own and living on my own makes it a little harder to meet Maltese, but even so it has been much easier than it was to make friends in the States*

23. Do you have any friends from your home country, or friends who are also expatriates?
*If YES, please approximate how many you have, how close you are with the majority of them, and how much time you spend with them.

*If NO, is there any particular reason why? AGAIN: answers will remain 100% anonymous, and there is also no pressure to answer a question you are not comfortable answering!!!

D: Yes. Very close to one. Others simply meet for a drink and/or meal sometimes. Do not care for English in general apart from a few.

L: Yes. 8 reasonably close. Some once or twice a week. Others once or twice a month.

J: Yes, about the same as Maltese.

24. What do you think about the term "expatriate?" Do you consider yourself an expatriate? Why or why not? If not, is there another way you might label your living abroad situation?

D: I do consider myself as an ex-pat wherever I have lived in the world. I object to being called "A GRINGO" in Spanish speaking countries.

L: Don't like the term. No. Because I don't feel like I 'come from' a particular country. A world traveller.

J: Don't feel like an expat, I have dual nationality now (US and U.K.). I consider myself a child of the universe, a global citizen, even a nomad.

25. Do you ever feel that the Maltese intentionally include or exclude you in social settings?

*If YES, can you give me an example? Is there any pattern you might have noticed?

D: Not intentionally. Sometimes it is hard for them not to break into their native tongue.

L: Haven't been here long enough to really answer that

J: No, they are people like any others, with their own personalities. We are all the same, no matter what country, just with different traditions and cultures.

26. Do you ever feel that the Maltese intentionally trick you or tell you false information at your expense in social settings?

*If YES, can you give me an example? Is there any pattern you might have noticed?

D: Not that I would know about.

L: Haven't experienced that.

J: No. It's all about attitude, be nice and people are generally nice to you. If not, then maybe they are just having a bad day, not up to me to judge.

27. Do you feel uncomfortable interacting with the Maltese? Is there any sense of confusion ever?

*If YES, is it possible for you to locate the source of this uncomfortability and confusion? Is there any pattern you might have noticed?

D: Simply the language. Sometimes words or meanings are mis-interpreted.

L: No

J: No. Having lived in different countries and being a native of two cultures (German and English), I know what it is like to try and communicate with foreigners. We are all in the same boat, just trying to get along. Every stranger is a possible new friend, so why be uncomfortable?

28. Are they any stereotypes you have encountered while living in Malta, whether in regards to the Maltese, to your personal heritage, or to foreigners in general?

*IF YES AND YOU ARE COMFORTABLE SHARING, please elaborate below.

*IF YES AND YOU ARE NOT COMFORTABLE SHARING, please indicate to whom these stereotypes applied, i.e. whether to the Maltese or to you, or to foreigners in general.

D: N/A

L: Not that I'm aware of apart from the Maltese being rather loud in speech. But not sure what you want. i.e. British drinking beer, eating fish & chips. Americans, everything's bigger and better...that type of thing?

J: No

29. Have you encountered any differences in body language, gesticulation, facial cues, etc. in Malta that differ from your own learned body language? (If YES, please briefly explain what you have noticed, whether you have incorporated it into your own body language now, and what difference in action/reaction for the Maltese you might have noticed after you adopted these).

D: I find Maltese people in general to be far more friendly than in other countries. I believe that if you give respect, you will receive respect returned.

L: The only thing I've experienced is the Maltese don't seem to worry about 'personal space' when waiting in lines etc.

J: Maltese are Southern Mediterranean, ie passionate, lots of arm waving etc - and also with Arab influences. The Maltese language is harsh sounding and requires shouting to be understood. I tend to use my hands a lot to talk so being here I do it even more. Psychologists say if you adopt the postures, habits of others, they will be more comfortable with you.

30. Do you enjoy the festas in Malta? Do you attend them?

D: Having attended a few, I find the crowded environment to be somewhat difficult to deal with. Also the noise factor is a nuisance.

L: I enjoy most of them. Attend some. But wish they had

the fireworks a little earlier in the evening!

J: I have been to a few, I appreciate them more when I am with a Maltese person who can explain them to me. I am getting used to the noisy fireworks!

31. Is there any other particular Maltese tradition (i.e. a ritual, food, type of music, daily activity like siesta, etc.) that you enjoy? Which one(s) and, if applicable, why?

D: I tend to stick to English and Chinese food. Can't stand the fact that they eat rabbit. Consider "Watership Down". You have read the book. You have seen the movie, now try the stew.

L: I like all the foods that are vegetarian. The Maltese Philamonic is wonderful (but that's not 'their' music). Like the 'quiet' time at siesta, but do not take one. Think its great that stores open early, close middle of the day and stay open later. Like all the 'little' corner stores.

J: I love the Maltese laid back way of life in general, it is typical of southern Mediterranean countries. I particularly enjoy the siesta and sitting outside in the afternoon drinking coffee, watching the world go by. I used to spend every summer in Germany, which has a similar culture. Malta has a much more outdoor life than England or the States. The climate in Malta makes it easier to be outdoors, which is great. It's nice to see families out together on evenings, just sitting and chatting or having a leisurely meal. It is much easier to live in the moment here.

32. Is there any particular Maltese tradition that completely irks you? Which one(s) and why, if applicable?

D: When the hardware store is closed for siesta and I need a tool, this is irksome.

L: I guess the petrad bomb fireworks...however, where we are, don't hear them too much.

J: No

33. Have you found any activities in Malta THAT YOU DID NOT PRACTICE IN YOUR HOME COUNTRY that you find relaxing or stress-reducing, which you now practice regularly (in Malta)? If so, how often do you practice it/ them? (This could be anything from racquetball to walking by the beach, to going out for dinner on Thursdays with friends, to meditation!).

D: The whole way of life is far more relaxing and the beach is of major importance.

L: Walking by the sea.

J: I practice tai chi by the Sea first thing every morning. This is easier for me to do here because of my location. Also I socialize more because it is easier to do so without having to travel distances by car. I walk or bus to everywhere in less than half an hour usually.

34. What sort of things or activities did you practice in your home country for fun, for comfort, or to relax? Have you continued practicing these in Malta?

**If YES, have you noticed an increase or decrease in how often you practice them?*

**If NO, can you identify a reason why?*

D: Been away from my home country for 30 years so impossible to answer.

L: Swimming in my own swimming pool. Cannot do that here in Malta as do not have a pool at home. But am swimming in the sea in the summer as much as possible. Researching hotel indoor swimming pools to swim in the winter. Walking. Do much more walking in Malta, as its 'safe' to do on my own. Reading. About the same as before.
J: I like to always try new things, explore new hobbies, do something different. I continue to practice some of the old but also add new. Life is much more exciting and relaxing here.

35. Do you find it easy to adjust to Maltese manners and morals? Why or why not? Can you concretely identify any "manners and morals" in Malta that are different from those in your home culture/country?

D: Being an easy going person, I find that I fit in very well in any country and accept that countries way of life.

L: Do not have a problem with that. As I believe that if you are living in 'someone else's' country, you really do not have a right to tell them how to behave. Two things - loud talking and personal space.

J: My morals and manners are constant and I don't believe in lowering them for anyone regardless of country. I can tolerate and understand others, but I don't have to copy. I don't litter and I don't bump into people without saying sorry. I - like the Maltese - don't line up for buses, etc, because I am part German and we don't either. However, I am aware of those who have been waiting longer than me (Maltese) and I let them on first - just as the Maltese do. I think foreigners here who don't get along with Malta's customs, etc have that problem because they are not appreciating that everyone of us sees a situation differently. You have to alter your perception sometimes and look through a different window to try and see what others are seeing.

Notes

¹ All name's have been changed for anonymity's sake.

² The survey was composed of thirty-five yes/no and short answer questions; see Appendix A for a copy of the survey.

³ As I have never worked in Malta myself, it is impossible for me to either confirm or repudiate her beliefs about the behavior of "traditional" Maltese women. Her views here remain important even in spite of this insofar as her views construct the parameters of her own subjective reality, which informs how she interacts with, and acts and reacts towards, others.

References

- Camilleri, Antoinette. "Language Values and Identities: Code Switching in Secondary Classrooms in Malta." *Linguistics and Education* 8 (1996): 85-103. Web.
- Kohonen, Eeva. "Developing Global Leaders Through International Assignments: An Identity Construction Perspective." *Personnel Review* 34.1 (2005): 22-36. Web.
- Mendenhall, Mark, and Gary Oddou. "The Dimensions of Expatriate Acculturation: A Review." *The Academy of Management Review* 10.1 (1985): 39-47. JSTOR. Web. 03 Aug. 2011.
- Moore, Ti'eshia M. *The Sojourner's Truth: Exploring Bicultural Identity as a Predictor of Assignment Success in American Expatriates*. Diss. North Carolina State University, 2009. ProQuest, 2009. ProQuest. Web.
- Oberg, Kalervo. "Cultural Shock: Adjustment to New Cultural Environments." *Practical Anthropology* 7 (1960): 177-82. Web.
- Padilla, Amado M., and William Perez. "Acculturation, Social Identity, and Social Cognition: A New Perspective." *Hispanic Journal of Behavioral Sciences* 25.1 (2003): 35-55. Web.
- Richards, David. "Strangers in a Strange Land: Expatriate Paranoia and the Dynamics of Exclusion." *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 7.2 (1996): 553-71. Web.