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Student Survey Responses from a Short-term Study Abroad Program

Paul Horness
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Abstract

This study examines the responses of two groups of Japanese university students to a self-administered questionnaire conducted immediately before and after their four-week study abroad (SA) experiences. The groups were a sample of convenience in which Group A (n = 50) received almost no pre-departure training, while Group B (n = 38) participated in a semester-length pre-departure training course. An 18-item, 4-point Likert scale questionnaire with a NA option was administered to measure their linguistic development, cultural awareness, and personal growth. A two-way repeated-measures ANOVA found no significant differences between the groups’ responses. Further analysis of the changes between the pre-departure and post-return surveys suggests that most participants expected their English to improve significantly as a consequence of study abroad prior to departure. Although this was not the case statistically, the trend in survey responses coupled with previous research results indicate expectations could change after their SA experience. Many of the participants indicated that their ideas toward the host country and Japan would change. The changes after the SA experience indicated that their attitudes changed toward Japan more strongly than toward the host country. The participants also indicated that the study abroad experience would enhance their desire to travel more in the future. An implication for future research is to examine the extent of pre-departure preparation on short-term SA experiences. Further research could also highlight the extent to which participants should expect language development to occur over four weeks. In addition, further research could also focus on the extent to which cultural awareness can be highlighted in pre-departure activities, and what personal growth markers can be expected form a short SA experience.

Keywords: study abroad, SA pre-departure training, cross-cultural knowledge, linguistic development, personal growth

Introduction

According to Freed (1998), it has long been assumed that studying abroad not only increases cultural knowledge, but also improves language fluency and skills. During the 1960s, second language researchers initially focused on measuring L2 linguistic gains from study abroad programs. General oral proficiency and a subset of language skills were measured in cross-sectional studies to estimate program impact. Such studies tended to be limited by the fact that participants’ language proficiency was measured narrowly using only test scores. By the mid-1990s, researchers began examining student perspectives on their SA experiences (Freed, 1998). This has led to a variety of results. One reason for that variety is that the variables, such as program length and study abroad context, have differed widely. In addition, the facets under investigation such as language proficiency or pragmatic skills or target community involvement have tended to greatly vary.

Positive SA Results

Study abroad programs have been reputed to positively affect second language learning in several ways. Broadly speaking, study abroad is often thought to provide an opportunity to help learners develop greater language proficiency and cultural awareness. One reputed positive effect of study abroad is an increase in language proficiency skills such as speaking or listening. There have been numerous studies indicating that proficiency skills increase with varying amounts of time abroad (Brecht, Davidson, & Ginsberg, 1995; Isabelli-Garcia, 2003; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004).
Other positive effects concern studying specific linguistic or structural forms (Díaz-Campos, 2004; Højen, 2003; Simoes, 1996), learning sociolinguistic forms (Barron, 2003; Kinginger & Belz, 2005; Regan, 1995), and learning cultural-related awareness or interests (Bacon, 2002; Chieffo & Griffiths, 2004; Peyvandi, & Maghaddam, 2009).

Unfavorable SA Results

Although many studies suggest SA has positive results on the whole, caution should be taken when interpreting the research. First, studies examining proficiency skills have not all been successful. DeKeyser (2010) found that it was difficult to demonstrate any clear improvement in oral proficiency after a mere six weeks abroad. He suggested that the learners lacked the basic explicit grammatical knowledge to enhance their linguistic skills. If learners cannot monitor their speech effectively using declarative knowledge, DeKeyser suggests that they would be more likely to avoid social interaction with native speakers. Diaz-Campos (2004) found minimal differences in the acquisition of pronunciation between 26 learners who had studied abroad in Spain when compared with 20 learners who had studied in a regular classroom context. Taguchi (2008) examined the development of pragmatic and cognitive processing ability in a L2 environment. She concluded that although learners’ comprehension speed increased while studying abroad, their comprehension accuracy did not improve or did not correlate with any enhanced comprehension speed. These studies caution that SA does not automatically lead to observable linguistic gains.

Study Abroad Preparation Programs

Another aspect of study abroad that has been examined more recently is pre-departure preparation. Pre-departure preparation reflects a continuum of practice. At one end, preparation can be a few logistical orientation meetings not related to language or culture. Somewhere in the middle is a program that includes logistical orientation, language practice, cultural awareness, and/or reflective guidelines. Cox (1996) outlined a Japanese college pre-departure training program that includes some useful activities to help students identify their study abroad goals. Although she did not specify a timeline, her school’s SA program was three weeks long. Cox also mentions how students need to examine how their own culture might impact their study abroad experiences. On the other end of the continuum, there are semester-long courses for study abroad participants. Rogers (2010) outlined a pre-departure program for Japanese students with an intercultural communication component. The program went beyond a mere perfunctory pre-departure checklist as it included a semester course to prepare students for long-term study abroad. Fritz and Murao (2016) outlined their pre-departure training program. Initially, they used information from previous students’ experiences to develop four areas to cover prior to departure: adjusting to culture, transportation, making friends, and a question and answer session. They allotted 60 minutes in total to discuss the ideas related to the four areas. They concluded by stating, “Universities that do not offer training sessions or preparation programs for students should take into account that students do need support, and that this support can make a difference in the adjustment of their academic and social lives during their study abroad experiences” (p. 17). Hockersmith and Newfields (2016) conducted a survey indicating that most Japanese universities have some type of pre-departure training programs, but that the content varies greatly. At one end, some universities cover only basic touristic details, while at the other end, some universities offer semester credit-bearing courses that include intercultural communication skills and in-depth area studies to make the study abroad experience more beneficial.

Gaps in the Literature and Research Questions

As highlighted in the review, study abroad often appears to have many positive outcomes, such as linguistic development or cultural awareness (La Brack, 2012). One gap in the literature is lack of understanding of study abroad programs that are shorter than one month. Thus, the first purpose of the study was to explore what type of linguistic development, cultural knowledge
development, and personal growth development the study abroad experience had on the students during a four-week stay. Through the survey and general interview questions from those involved with the programs, this study intended to use a quasi-experimental, mixed-method approach. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What expectations of L2 linguistic development did informants report having of their study abroad experiences?
2. What expectations, if any, did the informants have of developing a deeper understanding of the target culture as a result of their study abroad experiences?
3. Beyond language and cultural development expectations, did the informants have any personal expectations that changed during the abroad experience?

Method

Several universities were asked to take part in the study, but due to program limitations, such as too few students joining the program, data was collected from only two private universities in the Tokyo area which in essence represent a sample of convenience. The researcher has no direct relationship with either university, but knows teachers involved in both programs. This situation had one impact on the study in that there was no intention of comparing the programs directly to each other. The instructors involved agreed to help collect and share information about their programs as they were the direct connection to the participants.

Informants’ Context

Students from Group A began a study abroad program in the UK with minimal preparation. A travel agency representative came to that university and outlined the logistics of the trip. The orientation meeting lasted approximately 45 minutes and was conducted during the university’s lunch period. Each student received a preparation package that gave more detailed information about the itinerary. During the study abroad experience, the students stayed in the dormitories on the university campus and had 60 hours of formal English instruction in total. On the weekends there were special trips organized outside the area for them to enjoy.

Students from Group B received 12 weekly lessons prior to departing to the USA. In other words, those students took a semester-length two credit pre-departure program. The weekly classes covered a range of issues such as basic daily issues of travelling around the city to more complex issues such as the American political system. While in the US, the students had 60 hours of formal English instruction in total and they did not reside on campus. Rather, they participated in a homestay program, so after class and on the weekends each student had a different study abroad experience.

Due to privacy issues, limited parts of the survey were given to the researcher. The first section that asked for background information on the participants was not included. Additionally, individual responses were not given from Group A. Rather, collected responses for each statement were given. Therefore, the information outside of the N-size is an estimation based on those familiar with the program. There were 58 students in Group A and 41 students from Group B. Eleven participants, eight from group A and 3 from group B, were eliminated from the study due to incomplete surveys. There were approximately 83 female participants and 5 male participants, aged between 18 and 22. At both universities, the programs were open to all students from any major. It was estimated that about half of the participants were first-year students coming from a variety of majors.

Instrument & Procedure

An 18-item questionnaire in Japanese using a four-point Likert-scale with a NA response option (Table 1) was developed based on a model outlined by La Brack (2012) that sought to measure linguistic development, cultural knowledge development, and personal growth. In addition,
earlier research by Furmanovsky (2005), Cadd (2012), and Horness (2014) informed this questionnaire. Once the survey was completed in English and translated into Japanese, it was checked by five different Japanese university professors specializing in teaching English as a second language (TESOL). Overall, there was agreement with the English to Japanese equivalency. However, the NA response option was the most difficult to phrase because each person had a different Japanese word to use. The questionnaire consisted of four sections. Both the Japanese version and English version are given in Appendix A and B, respectively. All of the informants used the Japanese version. Section 1 consisted of four background questions. Section 2 consisted of three parts with six questions in each part for a total of 18 questions. The first part focused on linguistic development, the second on cultural knowledge, and the third on personal growth. Section 3 consisted of six questions and one discussion topic category matrix. The questions focused on specific activities while the students participated in studying abroad. Section 4 covers the same questions as Section 2 from a post-return perspective. The participants completed Sections 1 and 2 of the survey on the flight to the host country. On the return flight, they completed Sections 3 and 4.

Table 1. The Japanese Likert Agreement Scale Used in this Questionnaire with an English Translation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>とてもそう思う</th>
<th>まあそう思う</th>
<th>あまりそう思わない</th>
<th>全くそう思わない</th>
<th>該当しない</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly Agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Strongly Disagree</td>
<td>Not applicable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Another collection point of the study was the continual discussions with several of the instructors involved in the programs. These discussions were casual conversations documented in field notes providing an immediate reaction to the experience by those involved. In Group A’s case, the instructor traveled with the students to the host country. In Group B’s case, the instructor did not go to the host's institution. Information, such as most of the participants were first-year students, came from such discussions.

Results

There are limitations to the data analysis due to restricted access of information. As mentioned previously, individual scores were not given for Group A, only frequency counts for each statement were given. A factor analysis was planned to determine dimensionality of the survey, but that was abandoned because there was not enough information to conduct it. Instead, a two-way repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted to determine if there were score differences between the pre-departure training experiences. The average scores were calculated by combining all responses on each statement: 4 points = Strongly Agree; 3 points = Agree; 2 points = Disagree; 1 point = Strongly Disagree; 0 points = Not Applicable. The independent variable was whether the participant had pre-departure training or not. The dependent variable was the total average statement score from the pre- and post-surveys. After checking assumptions, no significant statistical differences were found, $F(1, 34) = .457, p = .504$. As seen in Figure 1, there was not much change overall between the surveys or between the groups.
Although there was no statistical significant difference between the two groups overall, there were differences relating to each item. One of the drawbacks of averaging the scores was nullifying the changes between Strongly Agree and Agree choices. Therefore, the analysis continued by examining each group’s pre-departure and post-return responses. Appendix E gives the averages between the two groups. The three concepts of linguistic development, cultural understanding development, and personal growth development were examined one by one.

**Linguistic Development**

Research Question 1: What expectations of L2 linguistic development did informants report having of their study abroad experiences?

Section 1 of the questionnaire contained six questions pertaining to students’ expectations for language development before and after participating in their study abroad program. All students from Group A and all students from Group B responded to question both before and after their study abroad experience. Only the Strongly Agree responses from this section are revealed in Table 2.
The first statement, *This SA experience will increase your self-confidence in expressing English*, focused on whether the participants anticipated their English confidence increasing as a result of study abroad. As shown in Table 2, 67 (Group A-41 + Group B-26 = 67) out of the 88 participants strongly agreed that their self-confidence in expressing English would increase prior to departure, whereas only 33 participants strongly agreed afterward. Regarding the estimated marginal means, the overall average, broken down between groups on the pre- and post-surveys, had Group B (extensive training) prior to departure scoring 3.66, and post-return averaging 3.47, whereas the Group A (with limited training) prior to departure scored 3.82 on average and post-return averaged 3.12.

The second statement, *The SA experience will increase your knowledge of English*, focused on whether the participants felt their knowledge of English would increase through the study abroad program. Similar to Statement 1, all of the participants felt their knowledge of English would increase prior to departure. However, upon completion of the programs, four participants indicated that the experience did not improve their English knowledge. Groups A and B both had a reduction of 10 participants each from the *Strongly Agree* choice. Group A on average scored 3.72 prior to departure and 3.42 post return, whereas Group B on average scored 4.00 and 3.24, respectfully.

The third statement, *This SA experience will increase your communication skills*, focused on whether the participants’ thought their English communication skills would improve. As expected, all of the participants thought that their English communication skills would increase with 65 out of the 88 participants strongly agreeing. Both Group A and B had similar expectations pre-departure on average, 3.86 compared to 3.84. Similar to the previous statements, the participants’ high expectations were not met. Upon return, only 44 out of the 88 had strongly agreed that their English communication skills had improved. Similar to Statements 1 and 2, the expectations were higher pre-departure than to post-return.

The fourth statement, *This SA experience will increase your motivation to study English*, and the fifth statement, both focused on the participants’ motivation to study English. Prior to departing, most of the participants expected their motivation to study English to increase, with 70 of the 88 participants strongly agreeing with the statement. Upon return, only slight changes occurred in the total responses (65 out of 88 *Strongly Agree*), such as one participant disagreeing and one feeling motivation was not applicable. In this case, the participants’ SA experience matched their expectations, in contrast to the first three statements.

The fifth statement, *This SA experience will change your attitude toward studying English in Japan*, focused on whether the SA experience would affect the participants’ attitude to study English upon return. The results were similar to the fourth statement as very little changed between pre-departure and post-return responses. Group A on average was 3.72 pre-departure and 3.74 post-return, while Group B was 3.58, respectively for both.

The sixth statement was *This SA experience will increase the amount of English usage outside the classroom*. It focused on whether the experience would increase the amount of English usage outside the classroom. Although almost all of the participants agreed that it would increase prior to leaving, it was one of the few statements where the participants differed. First, it was the
only statement in this section where less than half the participants strongly agreed with the statement. Second, it was the only statement where Group B went up and Group A went down. Group B on average scored 3.11 pre-departure and 3.50 post-return while Group A scored 3.4 and 3.14 on average respectively. Upon return 12 participants from Group B indicated they had stronger feelings than before for English usage. Additionally, those from Group A had slightly less favorable opinions upon return.

Overall, responses to the six questions related to students’ expectations and experiences of language development from the pre-departure to post-return surveys suggest that the two groups are similar. However, there were two areas where the two groups differed. First, Group B did not think the SA experience would influence the use of their English outside the class as much as Group A, but their post-return responses indicated that their perspective changed as seen in Figure 2.

![Figure 2](image2.png)

*Figure 2.* Responses to whether the SA experience would affect English usage outside the classroom.

Second, when examining Figure 3, Group A had a big downward change upon returning in terms of their belief that the SA experience would increase their language self-confidence. The shift occurred from the *Strongly Agree* choice to the *Agree* choice and an increase with the *Disagree* choices. Group B’s perspective mirrored Group A’s movement as well but not to the same extent, so perhaps their preparation might have tempered their expectation.

![Figure 3](image3.png)

*Figure 3.* Responses to whether the participants’ L2 self-confidence would increase.
Cultural Knowledge Development

Research Question 2: What expectations, if any, did the informants have of developing a deeper understanding of the target culture as a result of their study abroad experiences?

Section 2 of the questionnaire contained six questions that focused on cultural knowledge students expected to gain from their SA experience. With the exception of question 12, all students from Group A and all students from Group B responded to question both before and after their study abroad experience. Only the Strongly Agree responses from this section are revealed in Table 3.

Table 3. Comparison for Cultural Awareness Statements of Strongly Agreed Choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cultural Awareness Statements</th>
<th>Pre-departure</th>
<th>Post-return</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statements</td>
<td>Group A (n = 50)</td>
<td>Group B (n = 38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>11</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>10</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The seventh statement, *This SA experience will change your ideas of the United States/UK*, focused on changes of any cultural ideas of the host country. Upon departing, 43 of the 88 participants strongly agreed that the SA experience would change their cultural ideas of the host country, while six participants did not think the experience would change their ideas, and one participant did not feel the statement applied. Upon return, the number increased to 52 out of the 88 participants. The shift occurred from the Agree choice to the Strongly Agree choice while the number of Disagree choices decreased slightly.

The eighth statement, *This SA experience will change your political views of the United States/UK*, and the ninth statement, *This SA experience will change your social views of the United States/UK*, tried to narrow the topic by focusing on any political or social view changes toward the host country. For both statements, only slight changes occurred. Group B had the most intense shift relating to political views with 8 participants marking Strongly Agree pre-departure and 14 participants marking Strongly Agree post-return. The average score also indicates minimal changes between the groups. For Statement 9, both Group A and B averaged 3.2 for pre-departure and post-return statements.

The tenth statement, *This SA experience will change your ideas of Japan*, focused on any cultural changes toward Japan. Prior to departure, there was some sentiment that the participants’ attitudes would change with Group A’s average score of 3.04 and Group B’s average score of 3.05. After the study abroad experience, their attitude became stronger towards Japan with Group A’s average score of 3.26 and Group B’s average score of 3.26. Group A had 13 participants switch from Agree to Strongly Agree while 6 participants in Group B made the switch. Similar to Statement 7, the participants underestimated the positive change in the attitude toward Japan.

The eleventh statement, *This SA experience will change your political views of Japan* and the twelfth statement, *This SA experience changed your social views of Japan*, both tried to narrow the topic by focusing on any political or social view changes toward Japan. Upon departing, 26 participants strongly agreed that their political views on Japan would change. Surprisingly, only 16 participants strongly agreed with the statement upon return. Due to collection error, only 38 of the participants were analyzed for the twelfth statement. Upon departure, 11 participants thought their social views on Japan would not change. However, upon return only 5 held that view.
Overall, the trend from responses to the six questions related to students' expectations and experiences of cultural awareness from the pre-departure to post-return surveys suggests that their views did not change dramatically from the SA experience. The most salient point, as shown in Figure 4, was that the participants underestimated how much the SA experience would affect them positively, albeit minimally. This differs from the overestimation of language skill development in Section 1. Another difference between Section 1 and Section 2 was the difference in response choices. Although the average scores on the whole were similar in Section 2, the number of participants indicating disagreement with statements increased dramatically from Linguistic Development (Section 1). In Section 2, participants indicated over 200 times that they disagreed with a statement whereas they did it only 38 times in Section 1.

![Figure 4. Responses to changing cultural ideas toward the host country.](image)

**Personal Growth**

Research Question 3: Beyond language and cultural development expectations, did the informants have any personal expectations that changed during the abroad experience?

Section 3 of the questionnaire contained six questions that focused on the amount of personal growth students expected going into the SA experience and what they actually felt afterwards. All students from Group A and all students from Group B responded to questions both before and after their study abroad experience. Only the *Strongly Agree* responses from this section are revealed in Table 4.

**Table 4. Comparison for Personal Development Statements of Strongly Agreed Choices**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Pre-departure</th>
<th>Post-return</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group A</td>
<td>Group B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>(n = 50)</em></td>
<td><em>(n = 38)</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>29</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
The thirteenth statement, *This SA experience will increase your desire to travel abroad*, focused on whether the study abroad experience would increase the participants’ desire to travel abroad. Upon departure, all of the participants felt their desire to travel abroad would increase with 75 of the 88 participants strongly agreeing and 13 of the 88 participants agreeing that their desire would increase prior to departure. Virtually no change occurred upon completing the study abroad program as all the participants’ desire to travel remained intense with 74 of the 88 participants strongly agreeing and 14 of the 88 participants agreeing.

The fourteenth statement, *This SA experience will increase your desire to engage in international work*, focused on whether the travel abroad experience would increase a desire to engage in international work. The changes reflect a divide in attitude between the groups. Group A had 8 participants shift toward the *Strongly Agree* choice upon return while Group B decreased slightly by 3 participants. Interestingly, several participants felt the experience did not increase their desire to do international work.

The fifteenth statement, *This SA experience increased your desire to engage in international work*, focused on whether the study abroad experience would increase their desire to volunteer. The study abroad experience did not affect the responses except for a few participants. Three participants held more favorable views, while three held less favorable views.

The sixteenth statement, *This SA experience increased your self-confidence*, focused on overall self-confidence, not just L2 self-confidence. Again Group A and B differed in their responses though the average was similar. Eight participants from Group A shifted more positively while three participants from Group B shifted more negatively.

The seventeenth statement, *This SA experience increased your career path*, focused on whether the study abroad experience would influence their career path. Upon departing and returning, over half of the participants indicated the study abroad experience would influence their career path. Only six participants indicated that the study abroad experience would not have an influence on their career path as seen in Figure 5. For both groups, the fervor of the study abroad experience affecting their career path diminished equally.

The eighteenth statement, *This SA experience increased your desire to meet people outside of your normal social group*, focused on whether the study abroad experience would increase their desire to meet people outside their normal social groups. This was another area where the two groups differed. Group A shifted more positively because nine participants moved from *Agree* to *Strongly Agree*, whereas in Group B nine participants shifted the opposite direction. Two participants indicated that the study abroad experience would not change their attitude toward people outside their social groups.

![Figure 5. Responses to whether international work is desirable.](image-url)
Overall, the trend from responses to the six questions related to students’ expectations and experiences of personal growth from the pre-departure to post-return surveys suggest that there were changes in several statements: 14, 16, 18. Upon departing, generally all of the participants expected to be more self-confident, which was similar to Statement 1. However, in Statement 1, the participants expected stronger development in L2 self-confidence than just their own self-confidence. Upon returning, the participants indicated that the study abroad experience did not affect their self-confidence as much as they expected. Section 3 had the most movement relating to the responses. By examining only the averages, there is not much difference in Section 3, which is at odds with the general study abroad expectation.

Discussion

Main Findings

The first research question sought to explore what sort of linguistic expectations students had of study abroad. The results indicate that the participants’ expectations for language development were higher prior to departure than after completing the program as indicated in Statements 1 to 3. The participants might have thought four weeks was enough time to make great gains in their language proficiency, but post-return statements indicated that the participants’ expectations on motivation had been met. The participants expected their motivation to be high prior to going and the study abroad experience did not diminish their motivation. The participants indicated that their desire to learn English upon return was still strong. Although the participants had high language developmental expectations prior to going, perhaps the study abroad experience indicated that they needed more language skills development. Section 1 of the survey results is at odds with previous qualitative research results related to these questions. Interviews by Horness (2014) indicated that Japanese participants had reservations about how much influence the study abroad effect would have upon their return. The participants seemed to imply that the study abroad experience will not carry over to their English classes when they return to Japan. The attitude represents a paradox in that the participants seemed to have exceedingly high expectations for language development prior to going abroad on the one hand, but did not believe the experience would have much effect upon the return on the other. Nonetheless, the participants still indicated that they gained valuable language experience, but not as much as they expected. As some of the previous research indicates (DeKeyser, 2010; Taguchi, 2008), overall language proficiency, as measured by standardized tests, might not improve over a short period of time, but specific aspects might.

The second research question asked what the students’ expectations are, if any, in regard to developing or understanding cultural knowledge from the study abroad experience. Figure 4 had similar results to language development in that there were high expectations that their cultural knowledge would improve with the study abroad experience. Interestingly, the participants underestimated how much stronger their attitude would become. Additionally, the participants underestimated how much stronger their attitude toward Japan would change positively. For the most part, the participants underestimated how much cultural knowledge they would gain from the study abroad experience. These results fall in line with the results from Cadd (2012) and Rodgers (2010) in that study abroad experience allowed the participants a chance to reflect not only on another culture but also their own. The key point is to give the participants a chance to reflect. Although the questionnaire is limited in scope and depth, it was the first step in getting the participants to reflect on their study experience after leaving the host country.

The third research question asked whether the study abroad experience affected the participants’ personal viewpoints. The responses indicate that there was very little change in attitudes after the study abroad trip except for in meeting new people. Generally, the participants believed that the study abroad experience would encourage further travel abroad, increase their self-confidence, and influence their career path. The study abroad experience increased the desire for most of these attitudes. It is a positive sign that the participants want to meet other people outside their normal group. This attitude should serve them well in future travel.
**Overall Findings**

For the most part, the changes in attitudes in both groups were similar. For example, in Section 1, all six questions were answered roughly the same way by each group. In Statement 1 prior to departure, 82% of the participants that had minimal pre-departure training strongly agreed with the statement and 68% with extensive pre-departure training strongly agreed. In Statement 1 after returning, the percentage declined to 26% and 53%, respectively. In the remaining statements, a similar ratio was found between the pre-departure and post-return responses. The survey highlighted some differences between the groups even though the differences were minimal. Take Statement 1 for example. Even though the response trend was similar, the decline of expectations for Group B was smaller than Group A. Statements regarding cultural awareness and personal growth had the most variations, but as the number of informants is small, caution should be taken interpreting the results. Appendix F gives the specific percentages for all statements. Since there was not a great difference between the two groups, one has to wonder if the pre-departure material was considered by the participants to be important or useful for their SA experience. This is something that Rodgers (2010) alluded to in her conclusion when she stated, “However, it is uncertain whether this ability was used during the time they actually had the experience, or whether they simply analyzed and synthesized their experiences partly in response to doing the survey for this research project. This may somewhat cast doubt on the actual effectiveness of the course as a pre-departure training device” (p. 274). As the calls for more pre-departure preparation (Fritz & Murao, 2016; Hockersmith & Newfields (2016); Rodgers, 2010) increase, measuring the attainment of these objectives will increase.

**Limitations and Further Research**

There are several limitations to this study. First, for the Group A participants, the questionnaire was conducted on the departure and return flights. In both cases, the participants’ emotions were quite high which differed from Group B participants. Future research should include a more longitudinal design. The way that participants felt one semester before and one semester after their study abroad experiences should be assessed.

Second, the dimension of each concept was limited to six statements. Therefore, the statements might only give a partial view of that dimension. Future research should include a wider range of statements exploring the dimensions under study. Triangulated data based on a variety of research instruments would also make the study stronger.

Third, the researcher was not involved in either program directly, so how the participants perceived the survey and responded to it should be taken with care. It looks as though the participants completed the survey in a thoughtful way as there were no surveys completed with one score, such as all ones or fours. Additionally, the survey was completed on a plane so the atmosphere is hard to gauge.

Future research could examine how orientations prior to departure could affect expectations toward these dimensions. As most of the participants had high expectations of changes, more examination is needed of what type of changes are expected, especially language development or cultural awareness. Another avenue of research would be to examine previous travel abroad experience and its relationship to study abroad. Are family trips a precursor to higher expectations? Another avenue of research is to examine pre-departure preparation with post-return follow-ups. In order to prevent what La Brack (2012) called shoe-boxing, students need a chance to reflect upon their study abroad experience and how it can be included into their daily lives upon return. One more possibility of research would be to examine language proficiency and its relationship to the study abroad experience.
Conclusion

This study examined the responses of 88 participants from a study abroad experience in the UK or the US across three areas: linguistic development, cultural awareness, and personal development. The responses indicated that the participants had unrealistic expectations of language development for such a short time frame. The participants correctly anticipated that their attitudes toward the host country would change favorably, but they underestimated how much. Finally, the study abroad experience seemed to enhance their desire to meet people outside their own group in addition to travelling or working abroad. The implications of these results are that program promoters should temper expectations for language gains, but focus on the development of cultural awareness and personal growth. The study abroad experience is valuable, but it is not always pleasurable. Reflection and time are necessary components to enrich the experience. Teachers should develop ways in which these experiences can be incorporated into the classroom.
References


Cadd, M. (2012). Encourage students to engage with native speakers during study abroad. *Foreign Language Annals, 45*, 229-245


Appendix A. Japanese Questionnaire Used in This Study

Note: イギリス was substituted for アメリカ where necessary.

海外語学研修にご参加くださり、またアンケートにご協力いただきありがとうございます。このアンケートに対する回答については、「正しい」「間違っている」ということはありませんので、各項目に正直に答えてください。ご回答内容は、海外研修プログラムにとっての有益な情報とさせていただきます。また、このアンケートが当プログラムに対するあなたの自身の体験に役立つことと願います。なお、個人情報は厳重に保護されます。

研修前の経験について（オリエンテーション時、または機内にて）
1. ID#: __________________________ 男 / 女
2. この研修前に海外で過ごした経験があれば、どのくらいの期間滞在したことがあるか、教えてください。
   英語圏 _______________________________________________
   非英語圏 ______________________________________________
3. 授業以外で積極的に英語を使う機会がありますか。Yes / No
4. あなたの自身、渡航が心配である。Yes / No
5. あなたのご家族はあなたがこの研修に参加することを心配している。Yes / No

下記の各項目 Section 1～3 について、以下の選択肢の中で最も当てはまる番号（4）〜（0）を記入してください。
(4) Strongly Agree  (とてもそう思う)
(3) Agree  (まあそう思う)
(2) Disagree  (あまりそう思わない)
(1) Strongly disagree  (全くそう思わない)
(0) Not applicable  (関係ない)

Section 1-語学力の向上
この研修は「英語で表現すること」に対する自信の向上につながると思う。
この研修によって「英語に関する知識」を増やすと思う。
この研修によって「コミュニケーション能力」を伸ばすことができると思う。
この研修は「英語学習の意欲」の向上につながると思う。
この研修は「日本での英語学習の意欲」の向上につながると思う。
この研修によって「授業以外で英語を使う機会」が増えると思う。

Section 2-文化的知識の向上
この研修は「アメリカに対する見解（期待）」に変化をもたらすと思う。
この研修は「アメリカに対する政治的見解」に変化をもたらすと思う。
この研修は「アメリカに対する社会的見解」に変化をもたらすと思う。
この研修は「日本に対する見解（期待）」に変化をもたらすと思う。
この研修は「日本に対する政治的見解」に変化をもたらすと思う。
この研修は「日本に対する社会的見解」に変化をもたらすと思う。
Section 3-自己形成

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>この研修によって、海外旅行への関心がより高まると思う。</th>
<th>この研修によって、国際的な仕事へ携わりたいという意欲が増すと思う。</th>
<th>この研修によって、ボランティア活動への意欲・関心が増すと思う。</th>
<th>この研修によって、自己に対する自信が増すと思う。</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>この研修は、自分のキャリア形成に影響をもたらすと思う。</td>
<td>この研修によって、より多くの人と交流することへの意識が強まると思う。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

研修後の変化

1. 自分の考えを英語で表現することができた。

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>常に</th>
<th>たびたび</th>
<th>時々</th>
<th>めったにできないかった</th>
<th>一度もできないかった</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

2. あなたは、教室の外のコミュニティで英語を使うことができた。

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>常に</th>
<th>たびたび</th>
<th>時々</th>
<th>めったにできないかった</th>
<th>一度もできないかった</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

あなたが教室外で話し合った日本に関するトピックに○を付してください。

（複数回答可）

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. アニメーション</th>
<th>I. 日本の大学生活</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B. 日本での日常生活</td>
<td>J. 漫画</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C. 芸者</td>
<td>K. 武道</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. 日本の経済</td>
<td>L. 携帯電話</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E. 日本のファッション</td>
<td>M. 侍／忍者</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F. 日本の食事</td>
<td>N. 技術</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G. 日本の音楽</td>
<td>O. 着物や茶道などの伝統芸能</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H. 日本の政治</td>
<td>P. その他</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

下記の各項目 Section 1〜3 について、以下の選択肢の中で最も当てはまる番号（4）〜（0）を記入してください。
(4) とてもそう思う  (3) まあそう思う
(2) あまりそう思わない (1) 全くそう思わない
(0) 關係ない

### Section 1-語学力の向上

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>項目</th>
<th>内容</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>この研修で「英語で表現すること」に対する自信がついた。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>この研修で「英語に関する知識」が増えた。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>この研修で「コミュニケーション能力」が伸びた。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>この研修で「英語学習への意欲」が高まった。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>この研修で「授業以外で英語を使う機会」が増えた。</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Section 2-文化的知識の向上

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>項目</th>
<th>内容</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>この研修で「アメリカに対する見解（期待）」が変わった。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>この研修で「アメリカに対する政治的見解」が変わった。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>この研修で「アメリカに対する社会的見解」が変わった。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>この研修で「日本に対する見解（期待）」が変わった。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>この研修で「日本に対する政治的見解」が変わった。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>この研修で「日本に対する社会的見解」が変わった。</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Section 3-自己形成

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>項目</th>
<th>内容</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>この研修によって、海外旅行への関心が高まった。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>この研修によって、国際的な仕事に携わりたいという意欲が増えた。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>この研修によって、ボランティア活動への意欲・関心が増えた。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>この研修によって、自己に対する自信がついた。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>この研修は、自分のキャリア形成に影響をもたらした。</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(0)</td>
<td>この研修によって、より多くの人と交流することに対する意識が向上した。</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ありがとうございました。インタビューに参加を希望して下さる方は、その旨を “X” までご連絡ください。個人情報は厳重に保護されます。
Appendix B. An English Translation of the Questionnaire Used in This Study
Note: The UK was substituted for the USA where necessary.

Thank you for participating in the study abroad program and for taking the time to respond to this questionnaire. There are no “right” or “wrong” responses. Please answer all questions honestly. We hope this information will be beneficial for the study abroad program in the future. Most importantly, we hope these questions will help you reflect on your experience more thoroughly.

Pre-study abroad experience (at an orientation or on the airplane)

Background information (All personal information will be kept private)
1. Are you male or female
2. Prior to this trip, please state the amount of time you been abroad.
   English speaking country(s) ____________________________________________
   Non-English speaking country(s) _________________
3. Do you use English outside of class in non-related school activities? Yes / No; If yes, briefly summarize: __________________________________________________________
4. Are worried about the trip? Yes / No
5. Do you think your parents feel worried about you participating in the study abroad program? Yes / No

Please respond to each statement by writing the number you feel.
(4) Strongly Agree (とてもそう思う)
(3) Agree (まあそう思う)
(2) Disagree (あまりそう思わない)
(1) Strongly disagree (全くそう思わない)
(0) Not Applicable (関係ない)

Section 1-Language Development: SA = Study Abroad

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>This SA experience will increase your self-confidence in expressing English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>This SA experience will increase your knowledge of English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>This SA experience will increase your communication skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>This SA experience will increase your motivation to study English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>This SA experience will change your attitude toward studying English in Japan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>This SA experience will increase the amount of English usage outside the classroom.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Section 2-Cultural Knowledge Development

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>This SA experience will change your ideas of the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>This SA experience will change your political views of the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>This SA experience will change your social views of the United States.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>This SA experience will change your ideas of Japan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>This SA experience will change your political views of Japan.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>This SA experience will change your social views of Japan.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Section 3-Personal Development

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>This SA experience will increase your desire to travel abroad.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>This SA experience will increase your desire to engage in international work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>This SA experience will increase your desire to volunteer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>This SA experience will increase your self-confidence.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>This SA experience will influence your career path.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>This SA experience will increase your desire to meet people outside of your normal social group.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Post Return

After your study abroad experience

You were able to express your ideas in English.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

You were able to actively use English in the community outside the classroom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Very often</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Rarely</th>
<th>Never</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Circle the following topics you discussed outside the classroom (Circle as many as necessary):

A. Animation  I. Japanese university life
B. Daily Japanese life  J. Manga
C. Geisha  K. Martial arts
D. Japanese Economics  L. Mobile phones
E. Japanese Fashion  M. Samurai/ninja
F. Japanese food  N. Technology
G. Japanese Music  O. Traditional arts such as tea ceremony or kimono
H. Japanese Politics  P. Other (please wrote below)

Please respond to each statement by writing the number you feel.

(4) Strongly Agree (とてもそう思う)  (3) Agree (まあそう思う)
(2) Disagree (あまりそう思わない)  (1) Strongly disagree (全くそう思わない)
(0) Not Applicable (関係ない)

Section 1 - Language Development: SA = Study Abroad

1. This SA experience increased your self-confidence in expressing English.
2. This SA experience increased your knowledge of English.
3. This SA experience increased your communication skills.
4. This SA experience increased your motivation to study English.
5. This SA experience increased your attitude toward studying English in Japan.
6. This SA experience increased the amount of English usage outside the classroom.

Section 2 - Cultural Knowledge Development

1. This SA experience changed your ideas of the United States.
2. This SA experience changed your political views of the United States.
3. This SA experience changed your social views of the United States.
4. This SA experience changed your ideas of Japan.
5. This SA experience changed your political views of Japan.
6. This SA experience changed your social views of Japan.

Section 3 - Personal Development

1. This SA experience increased your desire to travel abroad.
2. This SA experience increased your desire to engage in international work.
3. This SA experience increased your desire to volunteer.
4. This SA experience increased your self-confidence.
5. This SA experience increased your career path.
6. This SA experience increased your desire to meet people outside of your normal social group.

Thank you for your help! If you are interested in helping out more, please contact X for an interview. Your privacy will be protected at all times.
Appendix C. Original Japanese Informed Consent Form

同意書

本状は、英語を学ぶ日本人学生のための短期留学プログラムに関する調査研究へのご協力をお願いするためのものです。

研究の概要
本研究のねらいは、日本人学生がこのような短期留学プログラムに参加することによって、よりよく言語 学習が体験できるかを研究することです。私がこの研究のために使用する資料は、次のものです。
（1）この短期留学プログラムに引率として参加する私自身の観察。
（2）短期留学を運営している学校事務局に提供された書類。
（3）学生とのインタビュー。
（4）このプログラムに関わる学生、教員、およびスタッフとの話し合い

協力者の権利

・あなたとのこの研究への協力は、任意のものです。
・あなたとのこの研究への協力は、無記名です。この研究で使用される情報は全て機密扱いとなります。協 力者のどの名前もこのレポートには記載されません。個々の協力者を参照するためには仮名を使用しま す。
・あなたは、いつでもこの研究の協力を取りやめることが出来ます。もし、あなたが、協力をとりやめる ときは、あなたに関するいっさいの情報はこの研究に含みません。
・あなたは、この研究の協力についてどんな質問でも私にすることが出来ます。

研究協力に関する同意書

私は、この書類に記述されている研究に協力することに同意します。私は、この協力は任意であり、担当 者に伝えることによりいつでもこの協力から撤退することができることと理解します。

この研究の目的は担当者から解説いただいています。アンケートを実施することにより、収集情報がこの研 究プロジェクトで使用されることは同意いたします。

Your consent to participate in this study
I agree to participate in the research project that has been described in this document. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from this study at any time by telling the instructor.

The instructor has explained the nature and purpose of this study to me. By completing the survey I agree for the information to be used in the research project.
Appendix D. English Translation of the Original Japanese Informed Consent Form

I am doing research on study abroad programs for Japanese students of English. I would like to ask you to participate in this study.

Explanation of the study
The purpose of this research is to explore the experiences of Japanese students in a study abroad program in order to better understand the effect that such programs have on the participants. The materials that I would like to use for this study will include 1) my observations in the study abroad program, 2) written material that study abroad students have provided to the school office that is organizing the study abroad program, 3) interviews with students, and 4) discussions with students, teachers, and staff involved in the program.

Your rights as a research participant
- Your participation in this study is voluntary.
- Your participation in this study is anonymous. All the information used in this study will be kept confidential. No name of any participant will appear in the final report. Pseudonyms will be used to refer to individual participants.
- You are free to withdraw from participation in this project at any time. If you decide not to participate, no information related to you will be included in this study.
- You may ask me any questions that you have about your participation in this study.

Your consent to participate in this study
I agree to participate in the research project that has been described. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from this study at any time by telling the instructor.

The instructor has explained the nature and purpose of this study to the participants. By completing the survey I agree for the information to be used in the research project.
### Appendix E. Average Scores for Pre-departure and Post-return for Group A and B

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Group A</th>
<th>Pre-departure</th>
<th>Post-return</th>
<th>Group B</th>
<th>Pre-departure</th>
<th>Post-return</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Statement 1</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>3.12</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 2</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 3</td>
<td>3.86</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td>3.84</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 4</td>
<td>3.82</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 5</td>
<td>3.72</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 6</td>
<td>3.40</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 7</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.66</td>
<td>3.32</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 8</td>
<td>2.88</td>
<td>2.64</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>3.21</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 9</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.24</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 10</td>
<td>3.04</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>3.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 11</td>
<td>3.02</td>
<td>2.56</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement 12</td>
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<tr>
<td>Statement 13</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td>3.68</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 14</td>
<td>3.30</td>
<td>3.44</td>
<td>3.29</td>
<td>3.13</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement 15</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>3.00</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement</td>
<td>Group A</td>
<td>Group B</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.08</td>
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<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.46</td>
<td>3.44</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.92</td>
<td>2.92</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>3.76</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix F. A Table Summary of the Strongly Agreed Percentages for Each Statement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Language Development Statements</th>
<th>Pre-departure</th>
<th>Post-return</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Group A</td>
<td>Group B</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.82</td>
<td>0.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>0.48</td>
<td>0.24</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| Cultural Awareness Statements   |               |             |         |         |
| 1                               | 0.58          | 0.37        | 0.72    | 0.42    |
| 2                               | 0.22          | 0.21        | 0.18    | 0.37    |
| 3                               | 0.36          | 0.32        | 0.40    | 0.32    |
| 4                               | 0.20          | 0.26        | 0.46    | 0.42    |
| 5                               | 0.42          | 0.13        | 0.16    | 0.21    |
| 6                               | x             | 0.24        | 0.38    | 0.21    |

| Personal Growth Statements      |               |             |         |         |
| 1                               | 0.92          | 0.76        | 0.96    | 0.68    |
| 2                               | 0.44          | 0.45        | 0.60    | 0.37    |
| 3                               | 0.28          | 0.18        | 0.32    | 0.21    |
| 4                               | 0.58          | 0.5         | 0.46    | 0.26    |
| 5                               | 0.5           | 0.32        | 0.52    | 0.21    |
| 6                               | 0.6           | 0.55        | 0.78    | 0.26    |
When Full-time Students Work “Full-time” Hours: The Conditions of Tertiary-level International Students in Japan

Antonija Cavcic
(Asia University)

Abstract

In parallel with the surge of international students opting to study in Japan, Japan has witnessed rapid growth both in the number of Japanese language schools and, in particular, the number of foreign residents filling part-time positions. Whether studying to work or working to study, the conditions of international students struggling to balance study, work, and life in Japan can have a negative effect on not only the individuals themselves, but educators responsible for assessing them. In this regard, this paper investigates the current conditions of tertiary-level international students in Japan. By examining recent media reports and statistics, I outline the repercussions that the work-over-study trend has for both students and educators and further discuss how these problems can be appropriately addressed.

Background

Before even discussing the conditions of international students in Japan, it is essential to take into account the statistics and examine both the backgrounds of most of non-Japanese university students as well as their reasons to study in Japan. Firstly, let us consider the basic statistics. Evidently, the number of international students opting to study in Japan has drastically risen since the early 2000s. For instance, in 2017 the number of international students in Japan rose by 11.6 percent from the previous year, bringing the total number of students up to 267,042 (JASSO, 2017). That is roughly the same number of residents living in one of Tokyo’s busiest wards—Shibuya. While these figures are constantly fluctuating, one can acknowledge that there has been a roughly ten percent growth in the number of students in the last decade. As for the students’ backgrounds, according to Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO)’s 2017 survey, 93.3% of the international college students in Japan are from Asia, with 40.2% Chinese and 23.1% Vietnamese. This is followed by students from Nepal (8.1%), South Korea (5.9%), Taiwan (3.4%), and Sri Lanka (2.5%). In descending order, the remaining 17 per cent of students come from Europe, North America, Africa, the Middle East, South America, and Oceania. As for their choice of education institutions, JASSO’s study revealed that most are attending Japanese language schools, followed by universities and professional training colleges (see Table 1).

Table 1. Number of International Students by Institutional Type in Japan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Persons</th>
<th>Increase/decrease</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Graduate school</td>
<td>46,373</td>
<td>(2,895 : 6.7% up)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University (undergraduate)</td>
<td>77,546</td>
<td>(5,317 : 7.4% up)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior college</td>
<td>1,915</td>
<td>(385 : 25.2% up)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of technology</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>(-5 : 0.9% down)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional training college</td>
<td>58,771</td>
<td>(8,536 : 17.0% up)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University preparatory course</td>
<td>3,220</td>
<td>(134 : 4.3% up)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese language institutes</td>
<td>78,658</td>
<td>(10,493 : 15.4% up)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Statistics provided by Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO, 2017).
The greatest growth in students has been in junior colleges, professional training colleges, and Japanese language schools. Given these statistics one can surmise that while quite a large number of students are attending university, it seems like most of the growth has occurred in junior colleges, professional training colleges, and language schools—that is, short term courses leading either to full-time employment or university. Table 2 shows the number of international students categorized by institution.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>National</th>
<th></th>
<th>Local public</th>
<th></th>
<th>Private</th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>% of total</td>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>% of total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Graduate school</td>
<td>29,174</td>
<td>62.90%</td>
<td>1,909</td>
<td>4.40%</td>
<td>15,290</td>
<td>33.00%</td>
<td>46,373</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University (undergraduate)</td>
<td>11,770</td>
<td>15.20%</td>
<td>1,836</td>
<td>2.40%</td>
<td>63,940</td>
<td>82.50%</td>
<td>77,546</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior college</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>0.80%</td>
<td>1,899</td>
<td>99.20%</td>
<td>1,915</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College of technology</td>
<td>510</td>
<td>91.20%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>8.80%</td>
<td>559</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professional training college</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>0.03%</td>
<td>58,753</td>
<td>99.97%</td>
<td>58,771</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University prep. course</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>3,220</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>3,220</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese lang. institutes</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>0.07%</td>
<td>78,604</td>
<td>99.93%</td>
<td>78,658</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41,454</td>
<td>15.50%</td>
<td>3,833</td>
<td>1.40%</td>
<td>221,755</td>
<td>83.00%</td>
<td>267,042</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Statistics provided by Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO, 2017).

It appears that the majority of international students in Japan are studying in private institutions. The only exception is with graduate students. Nevertheless, due to language difficulties and the acceptance rates, it might be the case that after reaching an N2 or N1 level of Japanese (the level of proficiency required to study at universities in Japan), a lot of international students opt for easier universities to enter. Then, once they have improved their language skills and academic abilities, it seems as if international students studying in Japan move on to national universities.

As for the popular degrees and courses, in contrast to the Abe administration’s push to foster highly skilled professionals in fields like IT, engineering, or science, or to attract students to courses in industries that desperately need cheap labor (such as agriculture, nursing, and animation and manga illustration), more students are enrolled in humanities or social sciences courses. Table 3, for example, reveals international students in Japan categorized by their major field of study.
Table 3. Number of International Students in Japan Categorized by Major Fields

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major field</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>% of total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Humanities</td>
<td>124,305</td>
<td>46.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social science</td>
<td>67,664</td>
<td>25.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Science</td>
<td>3,452</td>
<td>1.30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>30,804</td>
<td>11.50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>3,739</td>
<td>1.40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>4,356</td>
<td>1.60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home economics</td>
<td>4,787</td>
<td>1.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>3,221</td>
<td>1.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts</td>
<td>8,432</td>
<td>3.20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>16,282</td>
<td>6.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>267,042</strong></td>
<td><strong>100.00%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Statistics provided by Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO, 2017).

As evidenced in Table 3, engineering students make up the third largest group in the list, but they are still lagging behind arts and humanities students. Many factors undoubtedly contribute to this trend, but a course’s study load and admission requirements are arguably major contributing factors.

There are a number of factors contributing to each student’s decision, but we cannot overlook the fact that having a lighter study load allows for more part-time work. However, it is worth exploring why so many tertiary-level international students in Japan engage in extensive part-time work when they avowedly are here to study. Understandably, each person’s motivation varies, but according to Serizawa Kensuke in Konbini Gaikoku jin, some of the major motivations for international students to work part-time include: to improve language skills, to pay for living costs and/or tuition, to earn a little pocket money or to send money home to one’s family (Serizawa, 2018). Assuming Serizawa’s data is accurate, it is evident that financial matters are major factors influencing students’ decisions to engage in part-time work.

The findings of Serizawa’s data are reinforced in the findings from a 2016 JASSO survey completed by over 6,000 international students. According to the survey, it appears that over 70% of international students struggle with Japan’s high cost of living. Granted, some international students are financially better off than others, but when considering the overall expenses of both studying and living in Japan, to live a comfortable life it seems almost necessary for many international students from abroad to undertake part-time work. However, out of all the countries to study in, why do international students specifically select Japan as their study abroad destination?

Why Study Abroad and Why Japan?

Unsurprisingly, based on the findings from the aforementioned survey, the overwhelming majority (53.2%) of students decided to study abroad to get a degree. However, other major reasons included a desire to gain future job skills (47.3%) to work for a Japanese company in Japan (44.3%), or to be exposed to different experiences in an internationalized environment and become more globally-minded (31.8%) (JASSO, 2016). With career goals in mind, these are arguably quite sensible reasons to study abroad. Furthermore, considering that the majority of international students come from Asia and perhaps perceive Japan as one of the major countries contributing to the global economy, they seem like legitimate answers. However, to truly “become a more globally-minded person,” perhaps it would be more effective to study in a more internationalized environment or multi-cultural society. Thus, why would an international student from another country opt for Japan?
According to the survey, when asked why they selected Japan as a study abroad destination, the majority of students (59%) claimed that they were interested in Japanese culture and society and wanted to experience living in Japan (JASSO, 2016). Other major reasons included an interest in studying the Japanese language and culture (47.3%), or a statement that, “The higher education system and research in Japan is appealing” (35.8%). Clearly, there is a distinct interest in living, studying, and immersing oneself in Japanese culture. Unfortunately, this all comes at a great cost and is possibly what a lot of students fail to realize until they are already living in Japan. As the next section illustrates, after tuition and rent is paid, there is not a lot of money left over for the majority of international students living in Japan to live comfortably and explore the cultural aspects of the country.

**Income and Expenditures**

Just how much money does the average international student in Japan have, and how much disposable income is left over after tuition fees, rent, and bills for other necessary expenses have been paid? Acknowledging that extreme cases are not reflected in the statistics, JASSO’s survey nevertheless found that the average student’s monthly income was about 141,000 yen—most of which came from a) part-time earnings (57.1%), b) bank transfers from abroad (53.9%), or c) scholarships (36.7%) (JASSO, 2016). Interestingly, both junior college and post-graduate international students as well as researchers further reported less income than their Japanese counterparts enrolled in undergraduate courses. In any case, while 141,000 yen appears to be the average monthly income for international students based in Tokyo, it is not much at all if considering the total expenses. Excerpt 1, for example, reveals the self-reported monthly living expenses of tertiary-level international students in Japan.

Excerpt 1. *Self-reported living expenses of tertiary-level international students in Japan (JASSO, 2016).*

It is clear that the expenses (highlighted in green) are about the same as the average income, if not more. For example, international students at vocational schools spent an average of 157,000 per month while international students at Japanese language schools spent about 143,000 yen. In this light, it seems like the average student is either just breaking even or their income is insufficient to cover their expenses. Although extreme cases are not reflected in these statistics, the situation for the average international student living in Japan appears to be financially constraining, and this is perhaps why some international students might prioritize part-time work over studying. To gain greater insight into these students’ situations, it is necessary to consider both what they are doing to supplement their incomes and the number of hours they work per week.
The rules and policies to study and work as an international student may vary from country to country. For example, on one hand, like foreign students in Canada or France, when I was a university student in Germany (2010-2012) my visa did not allow me to work more than twenty hours a week. On the other hand, students in the United States and the United Kingdom are not allowed to work at all on a student visa (Serizawa, 2018, p.21). However, at present (September 2018), international students in Japan are allowed to work a maximum of 28 hours a week. Keeping in mind that a full-time English conversation teacher at Aeon works an average of 25 teaching hours a week (Aeon, 2018), 28 hours is quite a lot. To put it in perspective, 28 hours is roughly five six-hour shifts a week. Moreover, if you were to take into account the number of contact hours international students have at schools and universities, that does not leave much time to study, let alone sleep.

However, how many hours are international students in Japan actually working? Once again, based on the findings from JASSO’s survey with international students, if the percentage of international students working 10-20 hours a week (13.8%) is combined with the those who are reputedly working 15-20 hours a week, the total amounts to about 33.7% of international students (JASSO, 2016). On the other hand, 33.5% of international students claim to work 20-25 hours a week, so if we combine this with the percentage of international students who admit to working over 25 hours a week, it comprises almost 49% of students. Thus, one can surmise that almost half of these students are working twenty or more hours a week.

Although it is not exactly impossible to balance work and study while working such hours, critics have noted otherwise. According to a report published by the Ministry of Health, Labor and Welfare in late 2017, while the number of international students has been rapidly increasing in recent years, the majority of these students are prioritizing work over study to the extent that they can be perceived as migrant workers rather than students (Idei, 2018). The growing presence of such criticism, media reports, and overall discourse on the matter is not only undeniable, but worthy of analysis.

### Media Coverage

While businesses struggling to recruit employees have welcomed the influx of international students as a source of labor, media reports about such students have not been so favorable. Take for example some of Mainichi’s headlines: “外国人犯罪: ベトナム人最多多額の借金背負い来日低賃金行き詰まり” [Crimes related to foreigners: After coming to Japan, Vietnamese students are the most burdened with debts and stuck in a rut, working for low wages] (The Mainichi, 2018). There is also the Ichiran ramen case in which a number of foreign staff in Osaka were working more than 28 hours a week and covered in “Popular ramen chain Ichiran suspected of having foreign students work illegal hours (The Mainichi, 2018). Then there are articles from Asahi Shimbun such as: “留学ビザでも目的は‘労働’ 増え続ける外国人留学生たちのシビアな現実” [The severe reality of the ever-increasing number of international students on “student visas” with the intention of working] (Sawada, 2018), or “Japan treats 1 million foreign workers as ‘non-existent’” (Takaku & Takatsu, 2018). Japan’s national news broadcaster (NHK) has also reported on similar matters in stories such as “Vietnamese students studying in Japan faced with harsh reality” (Nguyen, 2018). For similar headlines to the ones outlined above, refer to Excerpt 2.

Although the above media reports are merely headlines, their content emphasizes the dismal reality of foreign students in Japan. Take for example President Magazine’s headline “The reason why foreign staff at izakaya are increasing: International students can work 28 hours a week” (Murakami, 2017). Upon first glance, it is a relatively rational headline. That is, the fact that there are more foreign staff is because they can work 28 hours a week. However, when closely reading the article, the mention of lawyers confirming that there are quite a few students working over 28 hours a week indeed indicates the bias of the article. Unfortunately, one could easily continue listing dozens of media reports and case studies of students who have violated the student labor laws, but rather than dwelling too much on these dismal stories and statistics, it is more productive and imperative to consider what needs to be done to address this problem.

Discussion

Taking into account the conditions of many tertiary-level international students, the labor statistics, and the saturation of media coverage on the matter, it is evident that there is a problem and perhaps the best way to address it is through policy. On this note, I have compiled a list of feasible actions that can be potentially taken by policymakers and institutions.

Strategies for Policy Makers

There are at least three strategies that policy makers can propose to help international students in Japan. First, as opposed to drastically reducing the work limit, limiting work hours to twenty hours per week is arguably a reasonable suggestion. By reducing work hours just by eight hours, students can increase their study time without significantly impacting their financial situation. Moreover, businesses struggling to fill shifts or hire part-time staff will not suffer severe loss or damage. With adequate time to exercise their language skills and interact with locals in their communities, not only can students integrate smoothly into Japanese society, but it might foster tolerance and awareness of diversity and
multiculturalism within local communities which are gradually exposed to more foreign residents.

On the other hand, for individuals who simply want to work in Japan on a casual basis or work for several months and decide how to proceed thereafter, a working holiday visa might be ideal. By offering working holiday visas to more Asian countries, Japan can secure human resources for part-time, casual, or even full-time positions in areas that desperately need employees. Although a mere speculation, working holiday visa options might deter individuals who simply want to work from unnecessarily applying for student visas. Education institutions too will benefit in the sense that students who genuinely want to study will opt for student visas and prioritize study over work.

In contrast, to essentially prevent students from having to work and reduce the various financial burdens that come with studying abroad, universities and government bodies could offer more scholarships. With access to scholarships, students can focus on their studies and the anxiety that comes with financial instability might be alleviated. While government bodies and some universities with budgeting issues might refrain from offering too many scholarships, the interest accrued on repayable loans and the trust relationships built upon the repayment on these loans are certainly advantageous.

**Strategies for Institutions**

Although the three previous strategies are quite feasible, implementing such changes will likely take a significant amount of time. Since policy change is generally slow and funding is scarce, intra-institutional strategies may prove a better starting point. Therefore, there are also three ways to assist the international students in educational institutions who might be struggling to balance work and study. First and foremost, we can certainly provide international students with more information about employment laws on campus and information concerning employment laws off campus. This would provide guidelines for international students to follow to maintain a good academic standing at a college or university. Second, information that surveys those international students who are working and those who are not can be disseminated to faculty members so that professors and instructors can be more informed, knowledgeable, and sensitive to students’ university needs and lifestyle. This would allow instructors to spot the warning signs and inform the relevant personnel in the international affairs department or student support center. Third, educational institutions could coordinate with businesses to provide work-studying programs. For example, more businesses could employ the Yoshinoya (Aoki, 2017) and Lawson (Serizawa, 2018, p.66) models of loan repayment (whereby students must work at the stores that pay their tuition until the debts are repaid). National, public, and private universities could refurbish unused or old buildings to create more dormitories. Or, there could be affordable housing programs such as free boarding for those students willing to be an in-house “helper” (home care worker) for senior citizens. In this way, international students not only earn a salary or their housing, but also obtain valuable work experience while serving Japanese society.

**Conclusion**

This article has revealed and discussed the background of international students, their reasons for working and studying overseas, and the financial challenges they may face while living in Japan. This article has also discussed how the working and studying dynamic of the international student is portrayed in Japanese media. The conditions of international students struggling to balance study, work, and life in Japan can have a negative effect on not only the individuals themselves, but on educators responsible for assessing them. Therefore, it is important for policy makers and educators of all levels in Japan to be knowledgeable of their
dynamic and to consider the aforementioned strategies in order to appropriately address their needs. Doing so will promote a healthy relationship between international students and the countries and institutions that host them.
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Chinese Overseas Students and Intercultural Learning Environments: Academic Adjustment, Adaptation, and Experience

by Jiani Zhu (Shanghai Jiao Tong University)
Palgrave Macmillian, (2016)

Background

At many universities around the world, Chinese students comprise a significant portion of the overall foreign student population. Currently there are 107,260 Chinese students at tertiary schools in Japan, which is 40% of the non-Japanese student population (MEXT, 2017). In South Korea, the ratio is even higher: 61.7% of the 123,858 foreign students in South Korea are from mainland China (Ock, 2016, par.10). For this reason, it is increasingly crucial for educators to understand the needs and characteristics of students from the Middle Kingdom. This book offers insights about Chinese in tertiary education overseas. Specifically, it considers how a small group of mostly graduate students from mainland China adjusted to university life in Germany over the course of several semesters. In a broader context, it also suggests how students from East Asia likely adapt to long-term overseas academic sojourns.
Research Design

This 259-page text is actually an amalgamation of three studies. The first study explores the expectations and experiences of sixteen Chinese MA and PhD candidates with an average length of stay of 28.9 months in Germany. Based on semi-structured interviews in Chinese that were later translated into English, it narrates the frequent gap between sojourner hopes and European realities.

The second study consists of in-depth interviews of four Chinese graduate students and two German lecturers. The instructors share their insights about how Chinese students tend to differ from other students, while the students detail various triumphs and travails during their extended sojourns in Germany.

The third study ascertains some of the longitudinal changes fifty-five Chinese students underwent over a one-year period in Germany. Both open-response questions and Likert-like scale questions measured how participants’ perceptions of their own linguistic abilities and adaptation to university life varied over the course of three semesters.

Main results

This study makes it clear that most students were unprepared for the rigors of extended study abroad. Academic life in Germany differs in numerous ways from China. As a result, a stressful “hard landing” and a lot of anxiety during their first two semesters in Germany was a common experience. Some tension was due to the linguistic and cultural challenges of adapting to German universities. In China, teachers tend to be directive and the pedagogy is generally lecture-centered with a strong focus on rote memorization. In Germany, however, instructors often adopt a more Socratic teaching method in which students are expected to contribute “original” ideas to classroom discussions. Echoing Lin and Yi (1997), the author adds:

The Chinese students were often confused by the conflicting paradigms of what made a ‘good student’ in China versus Germany, and often went back and forth between these learning norms. The conflict between these two learning cultures is a big challenge for international students (p. 162).

Moreover, social isolation is a frequent problem of overseas Chinese students, particularly in the early stages of their sojourns. Zhu reports how Chinese students tend to form friendships with other co-nationals, and friendships with Germans tend to be superficial and fleeting, akin to what Sovic (2009, p. 747) terms ‘hi-bye friendships.’

For those who survived the initial hardships of adjusting to life in Germany, a gradual appreciation of the host culture was reported among respondents. Although 16% of Chinese students at German universities drop out before completing their degrees, those who do stay tend to value the academic freedom that German institutions offer, and the ability to openly challenge existing ideas. Moreover, whereas Chinese universities generally mandate what course students must take and when they take their exams, in Germany there is much more curricular flexibility. Consistent with many other study abroad studies, long-term sojourners also reported higher degrees of self-confidence and subtle personality changes.

Pedagogical Implications

This work offers three pedagogical suggestions for study abroad programs. First, to reduce culture shock and help students optimize their time in the host country, Zhu suggests that extensive pre-
departure preparation is needed. Too many universities offer merely cursory pre-departure programs, leaving students psychologically and academically unprepared for their experiences overseas.

Second, the author recommends that host universities extend their orientation programs for new students and utilize student volunteers with prior overseas experience more. For example, she suggests co-national students could liaise with university international affairs offices, handling correspondence about the host university in the native language of prospective students. Zhu comments:

Unfortunately, most Chinese students participating in interviews had not used any first-hand information provided by universities before departure. One important reason was information asymmetry—Chinese students did not know of the existence of the information provided by the international office. Another reason is information inaccessibility—all information was written in German (albeit, usually with an English option, as well), which frustrated beginners in German language from further reading. . . These results suggest that the international office needs to optimize its services and make information more available and accessible to Chinese and international students. (p. 218)

Third, the author underscores the need for faculty members working with international students to learn more about Chinese culture and history. As Redden (2014) suggests, the behavior of Chinese students sometimes perplexes many Western faculty, who often misinterpret silence for indifference rather than a sign of deference for teacher authority.

Strengths and Weaknesses

This book offers a good chance to think about what “academic adjustment” means in a globalized context. It does a good job of contrasting many German and Chinese cultural norms. The author encourages us to look at academic adjustment holistically, pointing out that good grades do not necessarily indicate optimal adjustment overseas. However, although one of the three studies in this book incorporates a longitudinal component, we are curious as to how the informants might change after returning to their home country. Since the interviews were conducted in Germany, post-return changes are not measured.

In our view, this book has three primary limitations. The first concerns sampling: Although this book does provide many useful insights about Chinese graduate students in Germany, the extent that those findings can be generalized to less mature undergraduates or high school students is uncertain.

Second, although the author combines quantitative and qualitative data in her studies, the small sample sizes and reliance on multiple t-tests make the quantitative findings suggestive at best. As Brown and Crookes (1990) assert, multiple t-tests tend to inflate significance levels, leading to Type II errors. Moreover, self-reported Likert-scale data of “language proficiency” or “cultural adjustment” are prone to various cognitive biases and hence should be interpreted with a grain of salt.

Finally, to establish a coherent narrative, qualitative data have been simplified. Outliers were ignored to forge a storyline that is easy to follow. The following generalized claim illustrates this point: “Chinese students gradually transitioned from the attitude of ‘nobody takes care of me’ to ‘the lecturers are available but we have to take the initiative to ask’” (p. 162). Although this statement is likely true of most interviewees, reactions to study abroad are often diverse and complex. If we remember that this author prefers to write with a broad pen describing overall norms rather than a fine brush embellishing on interesting outliers, this concern is less serious.
The Bottom Line

In our view, this book is valuable for two reasons. First, it offers a comprehensive literature review that draws not only from English language sources, but also sources in Chinese and German. Second, its overall narrative is both systematic and easy to follow. The fact that Japanese and Korean students tend to share some common cultural characteristics with Chinese makes this book relevant to university educators throughout East Asia.

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Developing Interactional Competence in a Japanese Study Abroad Context

by Naoko Taguchi
Bristol, UK: Multilingual Matters (2015)

Background

What is interactional competence? How does it develop? Why do some study abroad participants seem to make significant gains in their interactional competence while others seem to merely fossilize and exhibit little evidence of communicative gain? This book explores these questions, offering insights about some of the ways that the verbal interactions of 18 intermediate-level JSL students studying abroad in Japan changed over a three-month period.

The first concept this book attempts to examine is interactional competence. The author acknowledges the insights of Hymes (1972), Hall (1993, 1995), and Young (2002, 2008) in developing her theoretical framework, but unfortunately she does not offer a precise definition of “interactional competence.” Those seeking to know how this term differs from related terms such as communicative competence, pragmatic competence, or strategic competence might prefer to consult either Young (2000) or Sun (2014). One noteworthy distinction made by Taguchi is that interactional competence regards linguistic performance as dependent on social context rather than as a supposed fixed personality trait. In other words, language is considered as a co-constructed product that varies with each given social context. As Young (2000) suggests, this makes it challenging to measure any reputed changes in interactional competence that might occur as a result of a study abroad experience.

Although interactional competence is a far-reaching concept, this book measures it narrowly in terms of speech styles (plain vs. polite) and the use of incomplete sentences (elided morpho-syntactic
markers). What the author found is that over the course of 15 weeks many of the students in Japan started using colloquial Japanese more frequently when interacting with peers. Their use of incomplete sentences in casual contexts also increased. Taguchi notes how many JSL students first learn the formal -desu and -masu forms instead of casual Japanese expressions. However, overuse of -desu and -masu forms can create social distance and a sense of needless formality. During their study abroad experiences, the book mentions how four in-depth informants in this study learned—to varying degrees of success—how to use varied social registers more appropriately. Taguchi remarks:

Japanese speakers strategically shift between speech styles in order to negotiate and co-construct interpersonal relations, affect, and interpersonal distance, as well as to index different social identities or mark discourse boundaries. Because this indexical use of speech styles in not salient in naturalistic, face-to-face interactions, learners often face challenge in understanding the mappings among speech forms, meanings, and contexts. Modelling and feedback from local members may facilitate socialization into the appropriate use of speech styles. A study abroad context that offers opportunities to interact in a variety of social settings can be an optimal environment for the acquisition of speech styles. (p. 24)

Although this book offers little practical advice about study abroad, it does provide some useful theoretical information about conditions thought to foster linguistic gain. In short, the author stresses the need for more peer interactions and/or interactions with host family members in diverse social settings to acquire a richer repertoire of L2 speech styles. She also notes how learners’ subjectivities and identities influence speech styles. Finally, Taguchi mentions that perceptions towards the target language community can also significantly shape language learning outcomes. Those organizing study abroad programs need to consider how to optimize each of these factors to enhance potential linguistic and personal gains.

**Strengths and Weaknesses**

This book has four strong points. First, it provides some useful theoretical information about conditions thought to foster linguistic gain. For example, the author stresses the need for more peer interactions and/or interactions with host family members in diverse social settings to acquire a richer variety of L2 speech styles. Second, Taguchi highlights how perceptions towards the target language community can significantly influence language learning outcomes. For example, international students in Japan who immerse themselves deeply in Japanese cultural traditions are likely to have more success with the language. A third nice feature of this text is that it highlights how language can be used in diverse ways. For example, it challenges the myth that in business contexts, polite language is always used. Citing a study by Fukushima (2007), Taguchi suggests style-shifting frequently occurs in business negotiations. Indeed, in tune with interactionist thought, she maintains that “speech forms are not bound to fixed contextual features” (p. 23) and that ample variation exists within each language. A final merit of this book is that it requires no detailed knowledge of Japanese.

On the other hand, in our view this book has three shortcomings. First, it uses a pre-test/post-test design with a very short time frame. Although a 15-week snapshot of how the conversational styles of some Japanese language learners change is offered, no hint of long-term outcomes is provided. Were the conversational gains that most participants made at the end of the study abroad gradually lost after the
informants returned home? What degree of language attrition occurred? Such questions point to the need for a more longitudinal study.

Second, the task prompt used in this research undoubtedly influenced the response outcomes. Although all of the participants spoke English, they were told to use Japanese exclusively and avoid code-switching during the recorded conversation sessions. Participants were prompted to “use a variety of conversation strategies, for example: stating opinions, soliciting opinions, asking and responding to questions, [or] commenting on your partner’s responses...” (p.160). These instructions likely influenced how the participants spoke. This problem is common to many interactional competence studies: Constructs such as “language proficiency” cannot be divorced from each specific assessment context.

A third concern we had about this study is that it fails to distinguish between the many levels of politeness existing in Japanese: -desu/-masu forms are lumped together with the more highly formalized “super-polite” keigo/kensongo that are used in some contexts.

**The Bottom Line**

This book may be useful for those studying pragmatics and interactional competence. It also has some value for those exploring the interface between social identity and linguistics. For those looking for advice about how to optimize study abroad programs (either as participants or as administrators), our recommendation is lukewarm. Japanese readers seeking more practically-oriented advice would likely benefit from texts such as Fumiko Ito’s Kōkō Ryūgaku Adobaisu [Study Abroad Advice for High School Students] or Toshi Sugita’s Seichō Shitakereba, Jibun yori Atama no ī Hito to Tsukiai Nasai [If you want to grow, learn with someone smarter than yourself]. The former text, though intended for secondary school students also contains lots of material relevant to university students as well. The latter text is not solely a “study abroad text” per se, but it does offer many useful hints about communicating in more globalized contexts.

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