

RYUGAKU

STUDY ABROAD N-SIG NEWSLETTER

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Message from the Coordinator

Dear Members and Friends,

The national conference is upon us, and this year we have an interesting format for our unvetted presentation. Stephan Ryan, Tim Newfields and Russell Hubert are hosting a presentation session followed by a discussion. The session will be of great value to those interested in SA program development as well as those interested in researching anything to do with SA. We hope you can all come.

There are of course other SA related presentations at the conference, and we hope all of them go well. Good luck to all those who are presenting.

After the SA SIG presentation the SA SIG AGM will be held in the same room. If you are interested in our SIG please come along. We will be holding our officer elections, and although we have a full slate of officers any competition would be most welcome. If you want to run for office or get more involved just turn up on the day.

We are in need of original submissions for our newsletter, and we really urge you to submit something to us. Papers can be of almost any type from experiential to pure research. This is a great chance for new writers to get some experience in publishing, and for those with more experience to share some of their insight.

Warm regards,

Andrew Atkins

The SA SIG Executive Team

				
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The Effects of a Short-term Study Abroad Program on the Beliefs of Japanese University Students in an International Relations Program

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Introduction and Background

A recent article in the Mainichi newspaper decried the declining numbers of Japanese students traveling abroad to study, (“Fewer Japanese Students,” 2010). Reasons given for this decrease include lack of ambition, tuition and other costs, the need for students to stay in Japan for job-hunting, and the spread of the Internet. There are also often cases where students may have to delay earning credits at their home universities in order to travel abroad. While some of these reasons are pertinent for long-term study abroad programs, they need not be such barriers for short-term study trips. It is possibly for these reasons that short-term study abroad excursions for Japanese higher education students have become popular in recent years. This paper investigates the effect of short-term study abroad on Japanese international students’ beliefs.

There is no shortage of research on the various benefits of studying abroad on language learners, whether it be related to its effect on general language proficiency (Tanaka & Ellis 2003), oral fluency (Segalowitz, Freed, Colliantine, Lafford, Lazar & Diaz-Campos 2004), pragmatics, (Cole & Anderson 2001), open-mindedness and globalmindedness (Hadis, 2005), or intercultural communicative ability, (Pederson, 2010). However, most of these studies focus on “long-term” study abroad programs (the cases cited above were all over three months in duration). Brauer (2005) surveyed high schools in the metropolitan Tokyo area to find that typical “summer study-abroad” programs last on average between two and three weeks. As shorter study abroad programs become more popular, the amount of research on such programs is growing. A number of studies particularly relevant to attitudinal changes in students are outlined below.

Geis and Fukushima (1997) discovered that a short-term study abroad program of six weeks duration had a positive effect on student attitudes and motivation. Student interviews were held before departure and then on return, and the authors note there were positive changes in attitudes toward using English in the classroom, although they state the results could not be “objectively measured” and suggest from their professional experience rather than any empirical testing that the most “enduring benefit” is increase in motivation to speak English in class.

Bodycott and Crew (2000) describe a short-term study abroad program for 234 Hong Kong students and argue through examples from student interviews that while language gains are important, most students showed greater improvement in areas such as learning skills, and motivation and personal attitudes toward studying English. Employing self-reporting questionnaires, Fujioka and Agawa (2007) found a significant increase in motivation to study English in 23 students who undertook a four-week trip that included special activities. In particular, they found that students' participation in a home-stay and interaction with local students studying Japanese had a strong positive effect.

In a study of over 600 U.S. students who either traveled to Italy or were part of a non-traveling control group, Shaftel, Shaftel and Ahluwalia (2007) found through student surveys and the *Cross-Cultural Adaptability Inventory* (Kelley & Meyers 1992) that students who stayed for a short-time (four weeks) showed great improvement in intercultural competence, which included such factors as open-mindedness, and this was even greater than in students who stayed longer (fourteen weeks). They also reported showing a greater interest in studying foreign languages upon their return home.

Anderson, Lawton, Rexeisen, & Hubbard (2006) administered *The Intercultural Development Inventory*, (Hammer and Bennett, 2002) pre-departure and once again on arrival home, to 23 American students who completed a short-term study abroad program to Europe. From the results of this, the authors conclude that the students displayed more willingness to accept cultural differences and they argue that short-term study abroad can have a generally positive effect on students' intercultural sensitivity.

Related to this, Chieffo and Griffiths (2004) investigated perceived changes in "global awareness" in students who took courses while on short-term study abroad trips versus those who stayed in their home country to complete similar courses. The authors separated global awareness into 4 separate constructs, "intercultural awareness", "personal growth and development", "functional knowledge" and "global interdependence". The authors highlight one of the key strengths of the study as its generalizability, due to the fact that the participants were from a wide range of departments, traveled to a number of countries, and studied different things. A one-page survey instrument was administered to 1792 students who took part in 71 different exchange programs, and the response rate was 84% (1509 participants). The results showed significantly positive perceived changes in the study-abroad students in all but one area, global interdependence.

The study abroad program

The International Relations department at Kyoto Sangyo University opened in 2008. While the students study English as part of the program, it is not the central focus. However, the students are generally aiming toward careers in an "international setting" so therefore many are generally well motivated to study

English. At the end of their first year of study, all students are required to attend a three-week “field research” program to America, Canada, Australia or New Zealand accompanied by a department teacher. The program takes place from late-February to early March, after their classes and exams have finished for the academic year. They are able to choose the country they visit, space permitting. During the three weeks, they attend a university language school and live in a home-stay setting. The classes they take at the language school have a two-pronged approach. The morning classes are devoted to improving their general English communicative ability, with a focus on traditional language teaching, grammar and vocabulary etc. The afternoon on the other hand is a much more content-based affair. The students each have a research question to explore and develop through a number of activities. The focus of this research question varies depending on which country they visit. Students spend the afternoon researching information for their topic and must present their findings to the class at the start of their second year, i.e. the month after they arrive back in Japan. As an example of the type of research the students are doing, for the 2009-2010 academic year students traveling to New Zealand investigated the general topic area “nature” and NGOs. As part of this, they created a survey pre-departure, which they used to interview people in New Zealand, such as their home-stay family and students at the university. They also had various activities to complete while in New Zealand.

An interview with one of the program coordinators was held in January 2010 to ascertain the goals of the program. While many questions for the interview were pre-prepared, it followed a “step-wise” Schiffirin (1994) format to a certain extent, where discussion questions are based on the previous answer of the interviewee.

According to this interview, the main goals of the program were identified as follows, (in order of importance).

- To bring about a change of attitude – in particular, an improvement in self-confidence as it pertains to second language learning.
- To enhance cultural understanding
- To build interest in their own subject area
- To increase motivation to study
- To help students overcome a fear of making mistakes

To investigate all of the above areas was deemed to be outside the scope of this study, so the first two goals became the basis for the research questions.

Research questions

This study attempts to answer the following research questions:

1. Does short-term study abroad affect changes in confidence levels in first year university students in an international relations program in Japan?
2. Does short-term study abroad affect changes in cultural understanding in first year students in an international relations program in Japan?

The hypothesis is that students will show changes in both areas as a result of their short time studying abroad.

Participants.

The participants, all of the first year students in the International Relations department in 2009, numbered 86. While a small few had previous study abroad experience, for the majority this was the first time they had studied abroad. These students were grouped into three classes (*kumi*) based on an in-house placement test at the beginning of their first year. Questionnaires in Japanese were distributed to all students in every *kumi*, once before their study-abroad experience at the end of their first academic year and again at the beginning of their second year, after coming back to Japan.

Methodology.

An initial interview with a program administrator (and teacher to some of the students) was held to ascertain the main goals of the program. With these goals in mind, a questionnaire was developed to investigate students' beliefs with regard to these specific areas. The questionnaire consisted of a total of 16 statements followed by five-point Likert response scales. The statements covered the two areas of interest, confidence in using English (especially spoken English) and cultural understanding. The questionnaire was initially designed in English, and then translated into Japanese by the author. This Japanese version was then sent to a Japanese bilingual for corrections and comments. To enhance the reliability of the translation, this document was sent to another Japanese translator for further editing. This new version was then pre-tested on a small group of 20 Japanese students who were not in the sample group to check completion time and for feedback on any areas of the survey that might have required clarification. With no problems apparent, the survey was finally administered to students in the three International Relations classes on the last day of the academic year 2009-2010. This was about three weeks before they would leave for their study abroad experience. The same questionnaire was completed by the same students three weeks after their return, on the first day of the academic year 2010-2011. Some students were absent on either the first or second administration days, which resulted in some non-paired surveys. In total, 69 paired surveys were returned, (an 80% response rate).

Following the administration of the second survey, a stratified sample of five students, (representing at least one of each of the four countries that students could travel to) were asked to participate in a 15 minute interview. This was a sample of convenience, in the sense that volunteer students were called for and these

students may have been more motivated and enthusiastic, thus not completely representative of the whole group. Semi-structured interviews of about 15 minutes were held with these students to elicit further details of their opinions of the study abroad program. While the number of students interviewed is likely too small to have any great significance, it was deemed useful for gauging general student sentiment to compare with the survey results and to try to shed light on some of the causes of the survey results for future research purposes.

Results

Pre- and post-departure paired-sample t-tests were run on each question. Of the 16 questions in the survey, three showed statistically significant ($p<.05$) changes, and interestingly, all three related to the same general area. Following is a brief discussion of each of those questions.

Statement 1: Because my level of English is low, I feel scared to speak in class

(自分の英語のレベルが低いので、授業で英語を話すのが怖い)

There was a significant increase in scores from the first survey ($M=2.80$) to the second ($M=3.06$). This suggests that students may have felt more fear in speaking after coming back from their study abroad experience. This may be due in part to the experience of using English outside Japan with home-stay parents and students from other countries and the negative effect of comparing their ability with those people.

Statement 3: I feel embarrassed speaking English in front of other people.

(人前で英語を話すのは恥ずかしい)

This statement, very similar in meaning to statement 1, also resulted in a significant increase between the first ($M=3.0$) and second ($M=3.36$) surveys. Combined with the results of statement 1, this strongly implies that far from building up confidence previously lacking in students, their SA experience may have actually led them to feel less inclined to speak in class.

Statement 8: When I speak English, it's okay to make mistakes.

英語を話す時に間違いがあっても問題ない。

For this statement there was a significant change in a negative direction, between the first ($M=2.65$) and second ($M=2.39$) surveys. This could mean that students became aware of the mistakes they made in speaking during their time abroad and became focused on eradicating them. While all three results seem to paint a rather negative picture, the student interviews show a positive side. While the students may have

lost some confidence, their motivation to address shortfalls in ability has perhaps been enhanced. The results of these interviews is discussed below.

With regard to the effect of cultural understanding, the results show no impact of the program on this area. There were no significant changes in means for each question focusing on this area.

Discussion

Rather than gaining confidence in speaking and using English through the study abroad program, for the students in this survey, the opposite seems to hold true. Post-survey results show that overall, students reported feeling more embarrassed and scared to speak in class. At the same time they indicated they were more concerned about making mistakes when speaking. With regard to their views on mistakes, this may not necessarily be a bad thing in that the students appear to have become more aware of their mistakes and conscious of the importance of correcting certain areas of their production.

In the final part of the study, five students from the program were interviewed face to face. Some of their comments suggest that there was indeed a very positive effect on student attitudes. For the interviews, students were told to speak in whichever language they felt most comfortable, Japanese or English. For the Japanese responses, a translation is included. Following is a short discussion of the results of these interviews, (the student's names have been replaced by the country in which they studied).

In answer to the question "Do you think there was any change in your attitude toward studying English after the study abroad experience?" all of the interviewees expressed a desire to study more:

America: "Of course - I need to study more...I met the host family...and my host family) mum told me *Where's your English* and I was shocked and I thought I need to talk more with foreigner"

Canada: "After I came back to Japan, I want to go to study abroad more than before, so now I study hard."

Australia: "When I came back to Japan, I wanted to go again to study".

When asked if there was any area of ability that they realized was lacking through the study abroad experience, most of the interviewees mentioned speaking:

America: "I think that we afraid to speak with foreigner because we don't want to mistake".

New Zealand 1: "My listening and other things got more confidence but my speaking wasn't because I thought that I have to study more...I could speak but the things I could speak was easy sentences."

When asked if the study-abroad had given them more confidence speaking English, all replied “not really”, but most emphasized that it had given them a determination to study and to speak more:

New Zealand 2: “行ったときにあまり言っている事が分からなくて、それでなんか色々困ったんですけど、でもなんか、行って、もうちょっと英語を話せるようになりたいな、と言うのはすごく感じる。”

Translation: “When I went there I had various problems with not understanding what people were saying, but having been I have a strong will to become a little better at speaking now.”

All of the students interviewed expressed a desire to travel overseas again and in fact three of the five had further study abroad trips booked at the time of the interview.

Taking these comments and the entire interviews into account, the decline in confidence that is apparent in the surveys may still be read in a positive light. Although students seem to be displaying less confidence with speaking in front of others, the interviews suggest that they have a renewed drive to study and to work hard to improve, which is most probably a result of this “dent” in confidence. Each of the four students interviewed spoke very positively of the program and each could pinpoint areas of personal improvement that were direct results of the study abroad experience. Perhaps, as Bodycott and Crew (2000) argue, while there may not be major changes resulting in quantifiable gains in language proficiency, short-term study is still a valuable experience which should be seen for its impact on student self-esteem, motivation and enthusiasm. The five students interviewed above all clearly showed elements of each in their answers.

Limitations and future directions

As an exploratory investigation, the results of this project are likely not transferable to other short-term study abroad programs. The present study surveyed the entire student population of one department and yet the number of participants numbered less than 100. Also, while every attempt was made to create a number of questions related to each research question, the use of multi-item scales would most definitely produce more reliable data. The results do however suggest that investigation of changes in affective beliefs as a result of short-term study abroad is an area that warrants further inquiry. Also, this avowed change in confidence might be something for program administrators and teachers to keep in mind when students return from overseas.

Conclusion

An exploratory survey of student beliefs before and after short-term study abroad revealed no statistically significant change in students’ cross-cultural understanding. There did however appear to be negative changes in student confidence. Conversely, face-to-face interviews revealed that students had gained a

desire to study harder in order to be able to speak English more. In fact, it was clear from interviews with students that the positive changes in their attitudes toward studying the language and increase in motivation far outweighed any reduction in their confidence to speak. That such a short time abroad can result in such valuable change in student attitudes strongly supports the validity of short-term study programs and adds to the growing body of literature substantiating this belief.

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次の質問の答えにもっとも近いと思われるものに○をして下さい。

1. 自分の英語のレベルが低いので、授業で英語を話すのが怖い。
a. とてもそう思う b. そう思う c. どちらとも言えない d. そうは思はない e. 全くそうは思わない
2. 間違った英語を使ってしまふかもしれないので、授業で英語を話すのが怖い。
a. とてもそう思う b. そう思う c. どちらとも言えない d. そうは思はない e. 全くそうは思わない
3. 人前で英語を話すのは恥ずかしい。
a. とてもそう思う b. そう思う c. どちらとも言えない d. そうは思はない e. 全くそうは思わない
4. 英語を話す時、正しい発音を使う事はとても重要だ。
a. とてもそう思う b. そう思う c. どちらとも言えない d. そうは思はない e. 全くそうは思わない
5. 英語に間違いがないかよく理解してから話す必要がある。
a. とてもそう思う b. そう思う c. どちらとも言えない d. そうは思はない e. 全くそうは思わない
6. 現在の自分の英語力に、全体的に満足している。
a. とてもそう思う b. そう思う c. どちらとも言えない d. そうは思はない e. 全くそうは思わない
7. 自分は将来英語が上手くなっていると思う。
a. とてもそう思う b. そう思う c. どちらとも言えない d. そうは思はない e. 全くそうは思わない
8. 英語を話す時に間違いがあっても問題ない。
a. とてもそう思う b. そう思う c. どちらとも言えない d. そうは思はない e. 全くそうは思わない
9. 文化の違いに戸惑いを感じる。
a. とてもそう思う b. そう思う c. どちらとも言えない d. そうは思はない e. 全くそうは思わない
10. 文化の異なる人と接する状況はなるべく避けたいと思う。
a. とてもそう思う b. そう思う c. どちらとも言えない d. そうは思はない e. 全くそうは思わない
11. 日本と外国の文化には異なる点がたくさんある。
a. とてもそう思う b. そう思う c. どちらとも言えない d. そうは思はない e. 全くそうは思わない
12. 異なる文化を持つ人と話す事は緊張する。
a. とてもそう思う b. そう思う c. どちらとも言えない d. そうは思はない e. 全くそうは思わない
13. 私は外国の文化に詳しいと思う。
a. とてもそう思う b. そう思う c. どちらとも言えない d. そうは思はない e. 全くそうは思わない
14. 私は日本の文化に詳しいと思う。
a. とてもそう思う b. そう思う c. どちらとも言えない d. そうは思はない e. 全くそうは思わない
15. 他の文化をもっと学びたいと思う。
a. とてもそう思う b. そう思う c. どちらとも言えない d. そうは思はない e. 全くそうは思わない
16. 外国の人々をもっとよく知るために英語を上手に話したい。
a. とてもそう思う b. そう思う c. どちらとも言えない d. そうは思はない e. 全くそうは思わない

Study Abroad Perspectives: An Interview with Elaine Gilmour

By Tim Newfields

Toyo University, Tokyo

Elaine Gilmour has a M.Sc. in Applied Linguistics from Edinburgh University and has been involved in language teaching since 1983. She began ELT teaching in Sudan and China. Since 1989 she has taught at four universities in Japan and she's been involved in a variety of research projects, most notably looking at how children learn languages in bilingual contexts, developing multi-media language learning software, and broader issues of language and culture. Other enduring interests include language testing and researching trends in ELT. This interview was conducted electronically in the summer of 2010.

How did you first become interested in study abroad programs?

Since joining Miyagi Gakuin University (MGU) in 1989 I got involved in coordinating and setting up study abroad programs. MGU offers one-month vacation style language school programs as well as the undergraduate SA year at overseas universities. My initial contract with MGU stipulated that I was expected to administer the short stay UK summer tour program. The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Technology (MEXT) encourages SA within paired "sister school" relationships. In my view, this has resulted in fewer students taking up the opportunity to do a SA experience. One problem many SA students face concerns fee payments and the exchange of credits. A few Japanese universities readily accept course credits from foreign universities, while others place a limit on them. This tends to reduce student enthusiasm for studying overseas.

Moreover, it's my impression that most SA programs substantially rely on the pastoral care of tenured foreign teaching staff at Japanese universities; for many it is presented as one of their expected duties. I've witnessed several different phases in Japanese university administrations, and decided in 2007 (whilst on sabbatical) to research further into ethnographic directions in SA.

How have Japan's SA programs changed in recent decades?

According to Sugimori (2009) the number of Japanese studying in the United States has been waning. In 2002, nearly 46,000 Japanese were there; that number shrank to 34,000 by 2007, and by 2009 it fell to about 29,000 (Ono and Tuang, 2010). One person in charge of promoting student exchanges at the

Japanese MEXT Ministry has been quoted as saying, "While some of that is due to a smaller overall pool of students, today's Japanese university students tend to be more inward-looking, preferring to stay in Japan" (Sugimori, 2009, p. 14).

Though fewer students from Japan are currently heading to the United States, the numbers going to China, Britain, Australia, Taiwan, South Korea, Canada, and other less expensive destinations have increased recently. In 2006 some 18,363 Japanese students made China their temporary home – 24 percent of those studying abroad. Britain ranked third among Japanese SA students, with 8.1 percent heading there (Ono and Tuang, 2010). Educational costs seem to be one reason for this trend, with aspiring overseas students keen to find cheaper destinations. In addition, many try to avoid paying for extra tuition at their home institutions since course credits undertaken while abroad are often not recognized.

In what ways would you like to see Japanese university SA programs change?

Many universities in Japan need to redesign their SA programs to promote more productive learning experiences within the wider rubric of the modern language and culture. The SA experience of many students could be improved if courses included interactive ethnographic, task based learning modules. Sending institutions also need to do a better job of preparing students for social interactions in their host cultures. Participants need more than just well crafted ESL courses – I believe they also need to learn how to become novice ethnographers.

What are the key features of an ethnographic approach to SA?

An ethnographic approach to language learning draws on social and linguistic anthropology, aspects of sociocultural theory, and sociolinguistics. Kramsch (1993) advocates a multidisciplinary approach in which learning lies in the combination of the experiential and intellectual; conceptual frameworks are developed for observing and understanding daily life in environments where the language/culture under study is understood through interaction with members of the L2 community.

Consider how communicative language teaching developed to encompass sociolinguistic approaches. Similarly, by focusing not only on language behavior, but also considering what gives meaning to those behaviors, the cultural content of a course can be synthesized. In my opinion, this should happen through learning initiatives that involve students in real world social tasks. However, as Stern asserts 'Culture teaching must not be confused with a formal course in social and cultural anthropology and needs to be more informal and personal' (Stern, 1992, p. 222).

How do you feel ethnographic training should be incorporated into SA programs?

The Council of Europe (2001, pp. 102-103) includes policy statements on *sociocultural knowledge/competence* and *intercultural awareness*. These provide a reflective starting point for ethnography projects, framed as they are within the wider discourse of intercultural communication. These statements resulted in part from an increasing realization that sociocultural knowledge played an important part promoting appropriate language learning within different communities. If SA institutions integrate task/project based approaches involving ethnographic training into their university studies based on the idea of language learners themselves as ethnographers, this should not only encourage more interactive cultural awareness, but also greater learning continuity in each SA environment.

In addition, because ethnographic fieldwork employs interviews and observation, students would associate (all be it organically), with a range of people from different social backgrounds within the host society. Ethnographic study requires students to "hang up their culture" (Gilmour, 2002, p. 17) and hopefully minimize the reported tendency to "hang out" mostly with other Asians in their selected English speaking SA context. If on the other hand, students are selecting destinations like China, Taiwan and South Korea; then of course the predominance of Asian culture is their preference.

What points do you feel university faculty designing SA programs should bear in mind?

The Japanese universities I have researched do not appear to make an effective learning provision within their SA arrangements – they are included as "icing on the cake" with little interaction or academic investigation of what actually goes on in SA situations. Granted there are one or two exceptions where possible community involvement is maximized – but on the whole that simply does not happen as effectively as it could. The question then becomes, "how can universities update and develop the quality of their SA participatory experience?" It goes without saying, attempting to tackle this question for the 1,223 or so universities in Japan is of course reductive. I suggest a more fruitful approach would be to explore how the European modern language degrees developed their "students as ethnographers SA approach" and then implement a parallel approach in Japan.

How do you feel instructors can enhance learning experiences in SA programs?

First, I believe it's worth learning about the Ealing ethnography project described by Roberts *et al.* (2001). The project provides general programmatic statements for translating intercultural learning objectives into practical course content.

If we conceived of a 3-year ethnography project, the first year would focus on learning beliefs, mores, and values in the host culture as well as some training in ethnographic methods prior to departure. The second

year, which would be spent abroad, would focus on ethnographic projects and data collection. The third year, in which participants return to their home countries, would focus on writing up the ethnographic projects for publication and giving oral presentations about the projects as well as an evaluation of the entire program.

Is the ethnographic approach you have described applicable only to those going on SA?

No - some form of ethnographic studies can be integrated into the language/culture curriculum even for students not planning to participate in a SA experience. Research themes for ethnography projects could cover areas such as body language, stereotypes and representation of others, language and social interaction, indigenous folkways and mores, gender as culture, family varieties and lifestyles, and so on. Such an approach would help to sensitize learners to not only aspects of big “C” Culture but also the scope and application of little “c” culture. Sample student ethnography projects are described in Roberts *et al* (pp. 185-189, 2001).

What sort of support should be provided for novice ethnographic researchers?

Students need a degree of supervision and guidance. They may be required to submit periodic fieldwork reports or diaries; this can be done by a variety of electronic means. They may need help in determining the final research focus since ethnographic accounts grow out of the field situation and are not the result of attempts to find answers to an already existing question. In such cases, guiding questions may be necessary to help students wax into their themes. With the help of informants, students need to realize the storylines behind phenomena they are exploring. Most novice ethnographic researchers need a lot of writing support.

How should ethnographic research be assessed?

Robert *et al.* (2001, p. 205) provide a list of assessment criteria for final ethnographic written projects for undergraduates. I believe it is worthwhile letting students have a copy of the assessment criteria by which they will be judged at some point during the final composition phase. This allows the writing to become a constructivist-learning task, not just a testing exercise.

How do learners who have gone through ethnographic study abroad experiences tend to change?

Jordan (2001) suggests that learners who have used ethnographic approaches are typically positive about the fact that they were better prepared than many students for their SA period - both in terms of study and project work, and in personal terms. They tend to be excited about working among informants and feel a

sense of ownership of the unique projects they produce. They can often articulate in mature, self-reflexive ways about the changes they have undergone. It is thrilling to hear young researchers speak of ethnography as a new way of seeing and a new way of listening. Persons who go through the SA experience tend to think differently about self/other relations and also about language and what it means to be a language learner. And I would add one further plus: they gain a competitive advantage. Knowing and being enthusiastic about a different language and culture would promote the ability to imagine effective marketing in that second culture - which has to be good for future business relationships, especially when we think about the burgeoning opportunities for advertising and marketing through the Internet.

In what areas would you like to see more SA research conducted in the future?

I think evolving digital technologies can offer a great deal for SA researchers. The semiotics of language teaching is instantly available on the Internet and we can see web-based communities, social networking sites and blogs such as Facebook, as well as targeted advertising. Developments in the field of communication technologies have empowered many people, resulting in a more “connected individualism” or what some Japanese call “personalism,”- as people use *social media* to create, read, or watch user-generated content. For example: writing or commenting on a blog; participating in an online discussion; watching videos on YouTube; viewing photos on Flickr, etc. These facilities provide an accessible and instantly exploitable resource for student ethnographers, even for those having only mobile phone connections. The applications can only be imagined: either for training novice ethnographers, or as a part of SA data collection and collaboration on projects, or language and culture home institution foundation projects.

Finally, are there any issues you perceive as problematic to the development of an ethnographic approach?

One problem is convincing younger Japanese colleagues to have enthusiasm for society-based ethnographic types of interactions and study. The overarching reluctance of Japanese academics to embrace the values of the international community (and even speak any of the six recognized world languages effectively) is, in my opinion, a reason why Japan has slipped in its international competitiveness ranking from number one in 1993 to number 27 in 2010, according to the International Institute for Management (Yamamoto, 2010). Without a stabilizing connection with the business classes in other countries it is difficult to see how Japan will be able to compete equally and economically amongst other G8 nations in the future.

Furthermore, because of the dramatic increase in Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) courses being offered in universities in non-English speaking countries, SA to locales where any of the

world's six major languages are spoken means students can go to universities in Bahrain, Brazil, China, Estonia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Spain, Taiwan, Turkey, etc.; with a much greater range of opportunities available than their sister school menus offer. As I mentioned at the beginning of this interview, it tends to be the foreign teaching staff that provide the pastoral care for students involved in SA; it's relatively rare to find tenured Japanese academics who themselves have actually participated in SA programs. Conversely, in contemporary European universities the majority of faculty members in any modern language department will have completed at least one SA as undergraduates. The European Erasmus program, if I may cite the example, sent nearly 200,000 students on SA this past academic year (2008-09), with the goal of getting at least 3 million students (over the course of 25 years since its inception in 1987) to have traded places by 2012. Androulla Vassiliou, the European commissioner presently in charge of education, announced the program was essential to improving the employability of future generations of Europeans (Swalec, 2010). It is also my impression that SA participation can effectively promote business relationships; particularly for the small entrepreneur style businesses that the Japanese government is hoping will expand. Ethnography puts people in touch with people at a personal level, and that just might be what's needed to stimulate a renaissance in the Japanese higher education sector. And politics aside, ethnography is just fun. People who like travelling and experiencing other cultures will just have lots of interactive and enjoyable adventures. They will also tend to mature as effective, connected, international individuals. In my opinion prestigious, high-class, plantation types of economies were really over before the end of the 20th century, why continue within such an atavistic paradigm?

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2. Ryugaku Forum (short articles and interviews): Maximum 1500 words
4. Classroom Ideas: Maximum 1500 words
5. Book reviews
6. Study abroad program reviews
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Format for submissions:

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