

# Ryūgaku:

## Explorations in Study Abroad

### Vol. 5 No. 2 August 2012

#### Contents 目次

Motivating learners for study abroad: Strategies for facilitating L2 motivation and acquisition by Mitchell Fryer .....	2
Book Review: <i>Language learning and study abroad: A critical reading of the research</i> by Celeste Kinginger (rev by T. Newfields) .....	15
Upcoming Events .....	17
Study Abroad Perspectives: An Interview with Eton Churchill by Tim Newfields .....	18

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## **Motivating learners for study abroad: Strategies for facilitating L2 motivation and acquisition**

Mitchell Fryer (Aichi Gakuin University)

### **Abstract**

For teachers in all second language (L2) learning contexts identifying effective strategies that initiate and sustain L2 motivation is vital as L2 acquisition (SLA) is a long and arduous process. Teachers must implement effective strategies that aim to facilitate the learners' L2 motivation in their teaching context. This study seeks to explore the motivational strategies that the learners in this teaching context recognize as influencing their L2 motivation and acquisition to try and understand how effective these strategies were in motivating the students and contributing to SLA.

**Keywords:** L2 motivation, motivational strategies, L2 acquisition.

Dornyei and Ushioda (2011) emphasize that second language (L2) motivation is an important yet complex phenomenon that is a significant factor for learners undertaking the learning of additional languages. They identify with many researchers, both within the field of second language acquisition (SLA) and in other fields and posit that motivation is a concept that is responsible for the actions of people, the length of time that they are willing to sustain these actions and the degree to which they pursue these actions. Research on factors that influence and facilitate L2 acquisition has identified learner motivation as a significant factor, as L2 motivation is fundamental in both initiating and sustaining the SLA process (MacIntyre, 2002). Understanding the complexity of L2 motivation and its vital role in SLA, in addition to being aware of strategies that facilitate motivation in learners, is essential for all teachers in L2 teaching contexts (Dornyei & Csizer, 1998; Dornyei, 2001).

This qualitative study aims to improve teaching practice through a better understanding of the L2 motivational processes of the learners in a Japanese high school study abroad context. Identifying effective motivational strategies and understanding how these strategies facilitate L2 motivation and SLA contributed to the undertaking of this research and contributed to the formation of two key research questions: What are the effective motivational strategies in this teaching context? Why do learners perceive these as contributing to their L2 motivation and acquisition? Six motivational strategies that have been employed in this context that were identified by the participants are presented, and their effectiveness in initiating and sustaining L2 motivation in this context and discussion of these strategies in relation to the literature in this field is explored.



## Method

### Context

This study focuses on a middle-ranked private Japanese high school with a study abroad program. Students enrolled in the study abroad program spend one year abroad in New Zealand during their second year of high school. The students participate in English communication classes 4 times a week.

### Participants

Ushioda (2009) emphasized that to understand L2 motivation more effectively requires the use of methodology that does not seek to group individual learners together based on data gathered and highlight the characteristics that they share, but to understand the unique characteristics of learners and conceptualize L2 motivation as an organic process that develops in individuals. What is required is to take a more person-in-context relational view of motivation which targets research on real people with goals, motives and intentions, not theoretical abstractions that predict outcomes based on theoretical behavior (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011). Exploratory studies that investigate and highlight unique characteristics in L2 learners will help researchers identify the types of pedagogies that can better facilitate L2 motivation and L2 learning behaviors (Ushioda, 2009; Newfields, 2012).

This person-in-context view of motivation contributed to a research design that focused on exploring and understanding the unique experiences and characteristics of learners in this context. Once informed consent forms were explained and signed in line with ethical research standards, a total of 8 students from 3 groups of students joined the study. Their demographic information appears in Table 1.

Table 1. *Demographic Information about the Participants in this Study.*

<b>Pseudonym</b>	<b>Academic Year</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>
Ayaka	High School Grade 3	18	F
Chiaki	High School Grade 3	17	F
Miwa	High School Grade 2	17	F
Natsuki	High School Grade 3	18	F
Saya	High School Grade 3	18	F
Sho	High School Grade 2	17	M
Taka	High School Grade 2	18	M
Yuko	University Grade 1	20	F

All of the students had passed the STEP-EIKEN Level 2 Examination, which the Society for Testing English Proficiency (2011) considers equivalent to a CEFR B1 level.



### **Data-collection instrument**

The study incorporated semi-structured interviews to gather data regarding the learners' experiences, opinions and ideas regarding their L2 motivations and acquisition. Semi-structured interviews that incorporated similar questions to Hsieh (2009) and Fryer (2012) were conducted to facilitate all relevant and appropriate topics being covered, in addition to allowing sufficient flexibility to explore in as much detail and depth as possible the respondent's experiences, views and opinions as determined by the respondent (Richards, 2009).

### **Procedure**

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in English and Japanese and lasted between 20 and 40 minutes and consisted of the 16 structured questions listed in Appendix A. The questions were asked in English and to assist the participants to understand the questions more clearly and where deemed appropriate, the use of the participant's L1 (Japanese) was also used. The interviews were electronically recorded and the data then transcribed following the same procedure as Fryer (2012). The transcriptions were subjected to thematic analysis through repeated readings of the transcribed texts. This facilitated identification of 6 motivational strategies used in this context that the students identified as greatly influencing their L2 motivation and acquisition (Boyatzis, 1998).

## **Results and Discussion**

The 6 motivational strategies identified through the analysis include: 1) using real world communicative tasks; 2) using goal setting, visualization and assistance in creating L2 selves; 3) motivation of the individual, not the class; 4) teachers as L2 guides; 5) reduction of negative anxiety and promotion of positive anxiety; 6) providing learners with the skills to become self-regulated, autonomous learners.

### **Using real world communicative tasks**

During the students' first year in the study abroad program, real-world communicative tasks were often the focus of the lessons in order to prepare students for their time abroad and to facilitate students engaging in L2 study for purposes other than testing. These tasks included learning how to ask the time for various purposes, ordering pizza and McDonalds, asking about their school timetable, answering the telephone and taking a message and being able to introduce themselves and the popular culture of Japan. The school outlined that the goals for the students enrolled in the study abroad program included passing the EIKEN Level Pre-1 examination, which the Society for Testing English Proficiency (2011) rates as equivalent to the B2 CEFR examination, in addition to passing an entrance examination into an upper echelon university. Test-driven instruction for university entrance exams and placement tests sometimes incorporate methods that are undesirable



in the eyes of learners. These methods often include grammar translation and definition based instruction. Stern (as cited in Byram, 2004) highlighted the limitations of the grammar-translation method as it places an overemphasis on grammar rules and incorporates only limited L2 use/practice in context. Fulcher and Davidson (2007) point out how high-stakes test-driven instruction can create negative images about testing and constrain L2 motivation. Stahl and Nagy (2006) outlined the importance of language use in context and for real-world communication to promote intrinsic motivation. Students who are primarily intrinsically and/or integratively motivated can have their L2 motivation eroded through test-driven instruction. Teachers must identify and understand the learners' L2 motivations to ensure some type of personalization is present in the language learning process (McGroarty, 2001). Moreover, teaching that endeavors to incorporate interactive learning that focuses on language use in context and real-world communication where possible can reduce the negative effects of testing on motivation (Stahl & Nagy, 2006).

To help prevent language attrition and to help learners become accustomed to the natural discourse of the TL group, it is recommended to implement real world communicative tasks in the classroom that are perceived as relevant by the learners regarding the facilitation of their needs, in addition to being socially and culturally relevant. Activities that promote real world L2 discourse and that are deemed relevant by the learners have the capacity to increase and sustain learner interest and contribute to their communicative needs and positively influence their motivation (Knight, 2001; Canaragarajah, 2001). Students in this context stated that the use of these types of tasks being used in the classroom positively influenced their L2 motivation and acquisition. The positive impact on the students through the use of real world communicative tasks was indicated by the following response by Yuko:

*(..) also activity was good for us , ordering pizza was good (.) I could do it in newzee my host mum so happy I could do it (..) time activity was good all Kiwis use half past and quarter to **toka** , it's good (.)*

The relevance of real-world communicative tasks and the contribution these made to the learners L2 motivation and acquisition can be seen also in the response of Miwa:

*at first I was thinking this study is just like English subject (.) study for test but after a time I can see that what we study will help me when I go to New Zealand (.) especially greetings and Kiwi English you told us and when your Kiwi friends came to our class and I could chat with them(..) **I was so happy** and I could know that this study was helping me so I feel like I wanna study more because it was good for me (.) I could talk with Kiwi more s::o I think I have more English (..) I can speak more*



Natsuki commented on the practicality of studying real-world communicative tasks that influenced her motivation during her study abroad and after she returned to Japan:

*when we studied time (.) like past and to that was helpful for me because first day at host family home host mum said we having dinner at half past six or something and I knew what she meant I was really happy (..) I remembered your class and then I was thinking it helped me (..) after I came back I think I enjoyed class more coz I know your class and English can help me (.) for test (.)but also for speaking to people (..) I think I learn more from talking to people*

### **Using goal-setting, visualization and assisting to create L2 selves**

In this context, the use of goal-setting, visualization and the creation of L2 selves was used to try to motivate the learners. Students were encouraged to list their goals and set out how to achieve the goals, visualize themselves as L2 speakers in the future and to identify discrepancies between their current selves and their ideal selves and use this to drive their L2 study. Over the past 20 years, self theorists and researchers of L2 motivation have become increasingly interested in the concept of L2 selves as powerful motivators as they have the capacity to guide and regulate behavior towards the attainment of academic goals and achievement (Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011). Teachers can nurture the L2 ideal self of learners through the use of forward thinking activities that encourage the learners to envision themselves at various times in the future. These can include classroom activities that encourage the learners to create posters and engage in discussion that describes their language goals for the future and who they want to be in the future. Encouraging learners to undertake these types of tasks can facilitate the identification of discrepancies between current and future ideal selves, which Dornyei (2005) identifies as a major motivating factor in SLA. Learners can also be encouraged to identify and discuss what they perceive as being most important to their motivation and acquisition in addition to outlining how they plan to achieve their aspirations. This process can help students identify their L2 ideal selves and provides a means for incorporating this powerful motivational tool into their language learning. This was a powerful motivating tool as outlined by Taka:

*when you said think of using English in the future I could understand what you mean (.) I thought about me and my dream (..) you know I wanna be a pilot so I made a picture in my mind of me studying at uni in newzee and being a pilot (..) this helps me study well and I never give it up still now I think this (.) same as you when you told us me in the future is throwing a rope to me now and pulling me through hard study and to keep going*

Natsuki also identified the benefits of goal-setting and visualization for promoting L2 motivation when she stated:



*when we did our goals poster in first year I didn't think about it so much but then I met a university student and he said I should think about when I go back to Japan (.) what my goal is (..) who I am gonna be (.) and what am I going to do (..) then I made new goals (.) new image for me for coming back to Japan (.) I thought about that image every day (..) that image helped me study and pass entrance exam*

### **Motivation of the individual, not the class**

Dornyei (2001) stated that cohesiveness amongst students in the L2 class is ideal and students often share responsibility for achieving group goals. In addition, working to improve the group cohesiveness is listed as a strategy to promote L2 motivation. The findings from this research seem to indicate a different pattern, as some of the students indicated they felt unhappy and unmotivated when being constantly spoken to as a group and encouraged as a group. They also disliked being expected to participate in language exams, extra-curricular activities and some lessons and activities as a group. It would appear from the findings that as students have different goals, inevitably they have different L2 motivations, and as a result teachers must recognize this and at times focus motivation at the individual level and encourage students to participate in activities that are relevant to the individual's goals and needs. This was indicated when Chiaki uttered:

*I didn't like that we had to all do same tests all the time like eiken toeic (.) I don't need that (.) also some activity not so important for everyone (.) sometimes I feel negative about my study when teacher trying to motivate to us (..) I know you and other teachers trying to help but I don't need it I feel okay some students not studying hard but I don't wanna hear that (.) I wanna study and keep positive , but that made me down*

Ayaka seemed to display similar attitudes towards strategies aimed at motivating the group rather than the individual with her response:

*one of the good things I think that helped me was sometimes we could work by ourselves in class and do our own study like for preparing for the bunka-sai (.) then you and homeroom teacher talked to us many times just man to man talking about our study try motivate us (.) I like that talking coz I feel like you can know my thinking and I got many ideas and good feeling for my study*

### **Teachers as L2 guides**

L2 teachers that have been L2 language learners will realize the importance of their own experiences in learning foreign languages. As a L2 learner of Japanese and Spanish, I related my experiences to this L2 learning context and encouraged the learners to view me as their L2 language



*Ryūgaku: Explorations in Study Abroad*, 5 (2) 2-14. (August 2012)

guide, something similar to what van Lier (2001) posited as a 'guide on the side'. This resulted in the learners acknowledging me as a L2 learner like themselves that could create optimal learning experiences as a result of my experiences and ensure the learners were the focus and center of the learning environment. Moreover, as a language guide I was someone that understood the challenges they faced and someone who was in the classroom to facilitate and understand their goals, and provide scaffolding in the form of help and guidance through the initial stages of the course and for difficult tasks. However, I encouraged the students to be able to study by themselves and be less reliant on me. Saya viewed this as a positive motivational strategy as she stated:

*I liked your stories of your experiences I wanted you to tell me about it more (.) I could understand that learning language is difficult for everyone (.) so I felt more power then I could know things that help to keep positive for my study*

Sho also indicated that this was an effective strategy when he uttered:

*I learned about your study and what helped you and what you did (.) so after that I felt I could study and when I had difficult time I could listen to your advice*

Dornyei (1994) states that in the L2 classroom the most prominent model is the teacher and that student attitudes and orientations towards learning are often determined as a result of the teacher's personal examples. The learners will often model their own behavior in regard to their level of interest in the subject and their effort expenditure based upon the L2 teacher's behavior. The encouragement of the learners by listening to my experiences and applying them to their own lives was aimed at facilitating the ideal-self motivation that Dornyei (2009, p.13) outlines as 'the representation of the attributes that one would ideally like to possess' in addition to learners being able to better understand their own reasons for learning. Moreover, by encouraging the students to view me as their L2 language guide, the students seemed to become less anxious and more relaxed, which the students identified as a contributing factor in the next section.

### ***Strategies aimed at reducing negative anxiety and promoting positive anxiety***

Teachers must realize that in L2 learning environments learners will often experience anxiety. While not all anxiety is inherently counterproductive as Ellis (2008) outlined, both facilitating and debilitating anxiety exist. Situated L2-specific constructs, learner anxiety is thought to have a consistently negative influence on L2 performance and can negatively influence motivation. This can result in avoidance and a non-willingness to communicate (Horwitz, 2001). Gardner and MacIntyre (as cited in Dornyei, 2005, p. 200) stated that 'anxious students can have lower levels of verbal production and are often reluctant to express personally relevant information in L2 conversation', which highlights the need to reduce negative learner anxiety, especially in study abroad contexts. The importance of a supportive and non-threatening environment for L2 learners to facilitate effective learning by overcoming anxiety was highlighted by MacIntyre (2002). Mercer



*Ryūgaku: Explorations in Study Abroad*, 5 (2) 2-14. (August 2012)

(2008) also highlighted the importance of a supportive atmosphere to promote self-efficacy and intrinsic motivation. Teachers in all teaching contexts must be aware of the types of anxiety students are experiencing. Students experiencing debilitating anxiety that results in not wanting to engage in L2 discourse and/or the lesson must be given encouragement and support. Conversely, MacIntyre (as cited in Ellis, 2008) posited that facilitative anxiety can facilitate performance and motivation. Motivational strategies were implemented to facilitate the creation of a supportive environment that encouraged students to go at their own pace and to engage in L2 discourse without fear of making mistakes to counteract negative anxiety. In addition, students were encouraged to take control of their own L2 learning, as the success of their study abroad experience was really 'up to them' to promote facilitative anxiety. These strategies seemed to contribute to the L2 motivation of the students as Sho stated:

*when you said our study and newzee trip is up to me it helped me (.) c::oz I started to understand you and other teachers my family nobody going with me so I must study for me so I can make study abroad success for me (.) when I don't want to study you don't get angry and just say it's up to you (.) so I feel not pressure but I know I must study*

Chiaki also indicates the benefit of these strategies by stating:

*sometimes I feel pressure when we do activity I can't understand so you help me and sometimes joking (.) you help me do activity (.) how to study how to understand and I never get a stress it's hard for me but I could do it*

Ensuring tasks and materials remain challenging and promote facilitative anxiety in addition to incorporating effective scaffolding techniques and support to diminish the negative effects of anxiety is vital in sustaining motivation (Mercer, 2008).

### ***Providing learners with the skills required to become effective autonomous, self-regulating learners***

Ushioda (2009) stated that autonomous learners are by definition motivated learners; however, it is important for teachers to teach not only language to students but also the skills they require to become effective autonomous L2 learners. Effective L2 teaching requires the teacher to teach the students the various L2 grammar, syntax and lexical items, but it must also include instruction of the skills such as self-regulation and facilitate understanding of the benefits of these in order to learn the L2 effectively. Teaching that encourages students to self-regulate and outlines how to become an effective autonomous learner in addition to the benefits of such characteristics when undertaking L2 learning are vital in L2 learning contexts (Her, 2008). According to Brophy (2004),



*Ryūgaku: Explorations in Study Abroad*, 5 (2) 2-14. (August 2012)

these factors contribute to improved L2 motivation as learners are encouraged to function as intrinsically motivated, self-determined and autonomous learners. Learners that display these motivational traits experience ongoing enjoyment and reward by simply participating in communication activities (Savignon, 1991) in addition to more effective L2 acquisition as they are able to experience L2 learning outside the classroom (van Lier, 2001). Encouraging and assisting students to identify opportunities for learning regarding their L2 acquisition through the identification and learning of unknown lexical items and grammar can result in learners that can self-regulate their learning and engage in L2 learning both inside and outside the classroom and sustain their L2 motivation during their time abroad in the TL environment.

In this teaching context, students were encouraged to keep a notebook that they would fill with useful phrases, new vocabulary and grammar, and their notes from classroom activities. Activities taught students how to recognize the lexical and grammatical features of discourse from movies, songs and classroom activities they did not understand and then to check them in the dictionary and use them in context and during class where relevant. Classroom instruction also included discussion and use of useful phrases and repeating an utterance and/or asking what the equivalent lexical or grammatical feature was in the student's L1. The benefits of these strategies were identified by Yuko when she stated:

*you showed us many ways when I watch a movie I learn new words (.) when I don't know a word I check it in the dictionary same when I read a book listening to music talking with a friend (.) when I am talking with a friend when I don't know some words or some grammar or stuff I know I must study more*

Miwa seemed to agree that this was effective in promoting L2 motivation as she stated:

*even when I was not in class I could learn by writing words and notes in my notebook even watching movie and talking to friends(.) in newzee I kept learning this kinda study felt easy for me it was fun study so I keep doing it even now in Japan*

This strategy seems effective in promoting L2 motivation and acquisition, as it facilitates learners being able to self-regulate their learning, and engage in L2 learning both inside and outside the classroom and sustain their L2 motivation during their time abroad in the TL environment.

## **Conclusions**

In this teaching context, the participants identified six motivational strategies that influenced their L2 motivation and acquisition. The responses of the participants seemed to indicate that the use of real-world communicative tasks reduced the negative effects of testing and contributed positively to their L2 motivation, as they valued being able to engage in real-world



*Ryūgaku: Explorations in Study Abroad*, 5 (2) 2-14. (August 2012)

discourse and perceived this as facilitating their L2 motivation and acquisition. The use of goal-setting and visualization of L2 selves was outlined as an effective motivational strategy, and the participants identified with the benefits of visualizing an ideal L2 self and goal setting and perceived this as a powerfully motivating tool. Motivational strategies that are aimed at the class level and not the individual can have detrimental effects on L2 motivation. As L2 learners often have different goals, sometimes teachers should employ individual motivational strategies for some learners. The participants also indicated that teachers use their own L2 learning experiences to guide the classes and communicate their own L2 learning experiences to the class. This can be an effective tool to promote L2 motivation and to provide learners with proven L2 learning skills. Reducing negative anxiety and promoting positive anxiety is very important in L2 learning contexts. Scaffolding must be used as required and a supportive atmosphere should be created to reduce negative anxiety; however, students need to experience facilitative anxiety to contribute to their motivation. Autonomous learners are by definition motivated learners; however, they must receive instruction on the skills they require to regulate their own learning. Teaching the students how to become self-regulating learners and ensuring they become effective autonomous learners can result in learners that are able to monitor their own learning and learn both inside and outside the classroom across various contexts. This is ideal for L2 motivation and acquisition.

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### **Appendix A. The Structured Interview Questions**

1. When you were in class 1B, what was your purpose for studying English? Has your purpose changed? Why?
2. Do you think your English improved a lot/ a little/ more than you expected/ about what you expected/less than you expected? Why?
3. What were some of your positive experiences during your study abroad both in the classroom and in general?
4. In class, what topics/activities/discussion helped to motivate you with your English study?
5. What activities in grade one helped you the most in New Zealand?
6. When you were in New Zealand, what helped you study English and keep you motivated?
7. In my class, what activities did you enjoy the most and what activities didn't you enjoy? Why?
8. What activities /classes /discussions motivate/motivated you? Why?
9. What things demotivated you? Why?
10. What was the classroom environment like? Was it important for you? Did it help you?
11. Were the materials, textbooks, activities relevant and useful for you?
12. How important is teaching study skills, not just English?
13. When you were in 1B, did you have an image of yourself speaking/studying English in the future or did you have a dream for speaking/studying English in the future for your job, university, study abroad, travel?
14. Did that image help you study / be motivated in 1B and 2B?
15. Do/Did you ever feel like giving up studying English?
16. Complete this sentence. During my study abroad, the study/topic/activity/advice that helped me the most was \_\_\_\_\_ because \_\_\_\_\_.



## Appendix B. Transcription Key

Taken from Fryer (2012)

(.) - short pause < 1 second

(..) - longer pause >1 second

[hello]- interjection by interviewer/participant during other speaker's turn.

((laughs, sighs))- non-verbal cue/comment

<unintelligible>

yes- said with emphasis

*mainichi* hard study- use of L1

well, maybe- a comma indicates speaker will continue talking

may:::be- prolonged

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## PUBLICATION NOTE

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*The next issue of this publication is scheduled to come out in November 2012.*

*If you have an article, book review, interview, or opinion piece that you would like to share please contact the editor at [timothy@toyo.jp](mailto:timothy@toyo.jp) by October 10<sup>th</sup>. We welcome material in Japanese or English.*

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## Book Review

# Language Learning and Study Abroad: A Critical Reading of the Research

by Celeste Kinginger

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This volume reviews over 300 different studies on study abroad (SA) in a coherent, accessible way. It highlights the respective merits and demerits of a wide range of French and English language SA research. Moreover, this 248-page work can be appreciated both as an introductory text for applied linguistic majors as well as a resource for those attempting to do SA research. Three broad themes are discussed in the six chapters of this book. Each is briefly summarized.

## Language Learning Theory

To meaningfully interpret any claims about the linguistic merits of study abroad, it is important to have some idea about how language learning occurs in general. Although this book does not offer a comprehensive language acquisition theory, it does underscore the importance of socio-cultural factors in language learning. Kinginger reminds us that language is not an "individually owned" product, but it also includes our relation to a community and the embodied experiences of being a specific individual with gender, social class, nationality, and race. The author elucidates how these factors interface with linguistic experiences by stating, ". . . language learning is as much a process of socialization as it is of acquisition. . . . [it] involves more than the accumulation of competence in some sense owned by individuals: it is one aspect of the larger process of becoming a person in society" (p. 156). Diverse ways that SA participants may be positioned in their host countries are described. Some of these ways can foster genuine language development and integration within a given community. However, the possibility that SA participants might be isolated, minimalized, and made incompetent is also acknowledged. Citing the experience of some JSL learners in Japan, the author notes how, "Language learners may be positioned in undesirable ways, as strange and fundamentally incompetent *gaijin*, or as homestay family pets. That is, interactions with host families may foster students' strategic *incompetence* as language users" (p. 202).

## Study Abroad Research

The author notes how most SA research is dominated by a strong utilitarian streak: essentially it attempts to prove how effective a specific SA program is. Kinginger further comments on the tendency of many studies to emphasize only broad outcomes and global constructs such as "proficiency, fluency or pragmatic competence" (p. 38); studies often fail to specify many details about learners' dispositions towards learning a given language. On a positive note, a recent trend in SA research is towards more emphasis on particularity (van Lier, 2005) and movement away from generalizations is noted.

This text highlights how SA research, which is often driven by SLA theory, frequently yields puzzling results. Part of the reason may be that a good deal of SA research is ridden with design flaws. For example, most studies involve small convenience samples and/or dubious coding procedures. Criticizing the over-reliance of discourse completion tasks in speech act analysis, a call for more "process-oriented scrutiny of language learners' routine interactions in study abroad situations" (p. 90) is made. Despite the limitations of many studies, the frequently mixed results,



and indeed the almost total lack of research in some crucial areas, Kinginger asserts that study abroad is "a valuable, if imperfect" (p. 100) way to develop communicative competence.

For those planning SA research, this book offers many cautionary tales. For example, the author points how many SA studies lack ecological validity because the instrument used to measure a given skill may be operationalized in ways that do not accurately measure that skill. Global listening comprehension, for instance, is often operationalized as scores on a multiple-choice listening test. Moreover, the fact that "students are tested on their ability to carry out formal tasks using standard language normally characterized by academic register" (p. 61) rather than natural language as it often occurs is an ongoing concern.

Readers are reminded to stay skeptical about existing SA research. Kinginger also argues for more combined method studies that take into account the emic perspective of informants, yet with methodological rigor. Finally, she advocates the use of an ethnographic and qualitative approach to SA that is both "more holistic and more particularistic" (p. 153) than standard approaches currently used.

### Study Abroad Results

We are astutely reminded that just because students are in an SA program it does not mean that they will position themselves as second language learners: many prefer the comfort of maintaining familiar L1 interactions even while abroad. For this reason Kinginger cautions that SA should not be regarded as a panacea to address the needs of all language learners.

With this proviso, ways that previous studies have attempted to ascertain the effect of SA on various language skills are described. Where SA's impact appears most salient is in domains related to social interaction. In particular, pragmatic fluency and approximation of native speaker sociolinguistic norms tend to increase as a consequence of SA. Persons who have engaged in a long-term SA generally have better speech act repertoires and register sensitivity.

Towards the end of the book, a possible erosion of SA benefits is discussed in light of increasing trends towards globalization, prominence of English as a lingua franca, and the spread of Internet technologies. With consternation the author points out how some students "remain attached to their communities of origin through their electronic umbilical cord of computer-mediated communication" (p. 149) while overseas. She also notes the tendency of some SA programs to become commercialized, packaged "entertainment and shopping experience[s]" (p. 218). Though many good reasons for questioning the claims made in a lot of SA promotional literature are given, the author expresses a tentative faith in the potential value of SA.

### The Bottom Line

Kinginger's book is probably the best summary of SA research in English since Freed's *Second language acquisition in a study abroad context* (1995) came out. This book covers some of the themes raised in Block's *Second language identities* (2007) as well as Regan, Howard, and Leme's *The Acquisition of Sociolinguistic Competence in a Study Abroad Context* (2009), but fortunately it offers a wider focus than both of those books.

One nice thing about this text is how Kinginger debunks several misconceptions about study abroad. For example, she refutes the notion that foreign language learning during SA is "an inevitable, effortless, osmotic process" (p. 114). The author also underscores how language learning is in many ways a deliberate act that involves conscious investment, rather than a passive process in which one soaks up surrounding information like a brainless sponge.



The main weakness of this work is that it relies on some studies that are not well designed. As a result, the conclusions that can be drawn are limited. Kinginger acknowledges this, and this limitation is by no means her fault. Another criticism that could be made of this book is that it uses the term "study abroad" too broadly. This problem could have been rectified if the author adopted Engle and Engle's (2003) detailed classification of the variety of SA programs. A final qualm is that although this text does a good job of describing American, Western European, and Japanese SA research, other contexts are under-represented. Since Chinese and South Korean SA students outnumber Japanese SA students globally, hopefully a future edition of this book will provide more information about SA studies in other countries throughout Asia and the Middle East.

Despite these shortcomings, the book belongs on the desk of every SA researcher. I am looking forward to a revised edition incorporating newer SA research in a decade or so.

-Reviewed by Tim Newfields

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## UPCOMING STUDY ABROAD EVENTS

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October 13, 2012 (ACT City, Hamamatsu, Japan)  
11:00 AM - 12:30 in Room #23

### **JALT Study Abroad SIG Forum: "Unconventional Study Abroad"**

Ken Groger, Kip Cates, and Takayuki Okazaki will discuss issues regarding study abroad and online social networking, a field program in Mexico, and the Peace Boat project.

For more information, visit <http://the-jalt-study-abroad-sig-discussion-threads.24930.n6.nabble.com/>

November 10 & 11, 2012 (Reitaku University in Kashiwa, Chiba, Japan)

### **27th SIETAR Japan Annual Conference**

#### **“ Exploring Intercultural Competence and Global Citizenship”**

For more information, visit <http://www.sietar-japan.org/>

February 17-20, 2013 (New Orleans Marriott, New Orleans, LA, USA)

### **Association of International Education Administrators 2013 Conference**

For more information, visit <http://aieaworld.org/events/2013-conference.htm>

April 3 - 5, 2013 (Sheraton Chicago Hotel, Chicago, IL, USA)

### **Forum on Education Abroad 2013 Annual Conference**

#### **“Moving Beyond It Was Great: Student Learning and Development in Education Abroad”**

For more information, visit <http://http://www.forumea.org/events.cfm>



## Study Abroad Perspectives: An Interview with Eton Churchill

by Tim Newfields

Eton Churchill is a professor in the Department of Cross-Cultural Studies at Kanagawa University. He received a doctorate in education from Temple University Japan in 2003. Since 2009 he has also been teaching courses such as sociolinguistics, qualitative research, and ecological perspectives on language learning at Temple University Japan. He is perhaps best known as a co-editor of *Language Learners in Study Abroad Contexts* (2006). Aside from his work on study abroad, he has published papers on interlanguage pragmatics, vocabulary learning, and sociocognitive interaction in language learning

This interview was conducted by email during the spring and summer of 2012.

*How have your ideas about English language education changed since you started teaching?*

I'd say they have changed quite a bit, and many of the changes reflect how the field of SLA has evolved. My first language teaching experience was as a French teaching assistant in college, where I was trained to drill students on their use of forms. It was an approach largely based on behaviorism with structural underpinnings of the audio-lingual method. While teaching French in a high school in the United States, I continued this technique . . . but also developed a content-based course on the French Revolution. In 1992, I came to Japan and began teaching English in an intensive four-skills, content-based program that placed comprehensible input and pushed output at a premium. There, learner errors were not seen as harbingers of bad language habits, but rather as a natural part of the developmental process.

Today, in my skill-focused courses, I continue to ask students to produce extended discourse, and require them to do a lot of reading and writing to support their in-class speaking activities. I do extensive work with vocabulary, and focus on grammar as issues arise in learners' production. In my content-based courses, I try to provide visual support for my lectures, teach vocabulary as it comes up, and give students opportunities to confirm their understanding and to ask questions.

As an academic, my initial training focused on Gass's (1997, 2006) Input-Interaction-Output model, but my interests took more of a social turn in the late 1990s. Partially related to this, my dissertation was on how language learning opportunities were both created and missed during a study abroad program. The volume *Language Learners in Study Abroad Contexts* (2006), which was edited with Margaret DuFon, also reflects this interest. . . .

After completing my dissertation, I became increasingly interested in Dwight Atkinson's sociocognitive approach to language learning (2002, 2007, 2010, 2011) which advocates taking into account not only the learners' interaction with more proficient speakers, but also their interaction with the environment. A more detailed explanation of this take on language learning can be found in papers I've written with Dwight, Hanako Okada, and Takako Nishino in *The Modern Language Journal* as well as in my 2008 article in *Applied Linguistics*.

*Could you tell us about your university's study abroad program? What do you feel is its strong point? Ideally, how would you like to see that program change?*

With the push toward globalization in education, today we are no longer at a point where we can talk of university study abroad programs in the singular, as if there is one program at each university. Not only is there an array of short-term programs across departments, most universities also have study abroad options that feature extended study overseas for a year or more. Such programs will undoubtedly increase in the years ahead as universities continue to form more "outer



circle" sister school relations in Europe and Asia, as well as in more traditional "inner circle" destinations such as the U.S., the U.K., Canada, and Australia.

In addition, universities frequently arrange study abroad fairs where private and state-sponsored programs are being advertised to students. Study abroad options for foreign languages other than English have also been expanding. For students, the diversity of programs offered is probably a good thing as it allows them to do some comparative shopping.

I would say that the better programs are the ones where individual students can be more or less mainstreamed for at least a semester, but preferably a full year. If students' proficiency is such that they need to be in an ESL class, they will be best served if they are in classes where they are in a minority in terms of their first language. Finally, students will get the most for their money in programs where less of their expenses are going to intermediaries.

*What interesting studies about multicultural education and study abroad you have read recently? Also, what sort of research studies are you hoping to see in this area in the future?*

The article "Evolving threads in study abroad research" that I co-authored with Margaret DuFon in 2006 proposed some possible areas to investigate. Some notable studies that I have read since then include Celeste Kinginger's 2008 *Modern Language Journal* monograph, as well as her 2011 article in the *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics* on "Enhancing language learning in study abroad."

Others worth mentioning include Minegishi-Cook's investigation of study abroad students in Japan as well as Sasaki's 2007 and 2011 works on the effects of study abroad on Japanese EFL students' writing. Finally, Maeda-Simon's 2011 book about her own steps towards becoming a speaker of Japanese is worth reading.

*In your view, how can Japanese universities better promote multicultural understanding?*

This is a huge question that is really beyond the scope of an interview on study abroad . . . . However, here are a few thoughts.

The majority of Japanese students entering the university today have little to no background in World History. World History should be required at the high school level and teachers should be encouraged to integrate multicultural approaches into these courses. In their Japanese History courses, students should also learn more about multicultural issues. A few topics that come to mind include 1) the history of how the Japanese language became codified in the late 19th and early 20th century and the ramifications of this for other cultural groups such the Ainu and Ryukyans in Okinawa, 2) relations between Japan and the Ryukyus, and 3) Korean experiences in Japan.

As for Japanese universities, a soft approach would be to require professors in the humanities and social sciences to include a unit on multicultural issues in their syllabi. An alternative approach would be to create a set of core courses focusing on multicultural education and understanding and to require students to take a certain number of these courses before graduation.

Perhaps the most realistic path toward promoting multicultural understanding at Japanese universities is going to continue to be through the work of individual teachers, through their selection of content and the time that they devote to focusing on intercultural communication.

*Some schools require their students to study abroad. What do you think of that policy?*

If schools have well-defined goals and students can benefit from the programs, this probably makes a lot of sense in terms of the long-term needs of the students, the universities, and Japanese society. However, I see less value for the students if mandatory study abroad experiences are



essentially being used as advertising tools for schools that are having difficulty in attracting students.

*What trends have you noticed among study abroad programs in Japan over the last 20-30 years? Do any of those trends concern you?*

Probably my biggest concern would be what I see as a move from grass roots organization of study abroad programs to the commercialization of these programs. This trend is perhaps inevitable, but I believe that it leads to greater costs for the students and quite possibly lower returns.

On the positive side, we are seeing more Japanese students studying abroad in countries where English is not the primary language such as South Korea, Finland, Germany, China. More and more students are also studying English in countries such as Indonesia, Hong Kong, and Malaysia. I see this trend towards greater diversity as beneficial to Japan and these students in the long run.

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