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Evidence for and against Rexeisen’s Boomerang Hypothesis among study abroad returnees
by Russell Hubert and Tim Newfields

This paper compares three studies offering partial support of Rexeisen’s Boomerang Hypothesis (2012-2013) with four contrastive studies suggesting not all study abroad gains readily erode. It concludes by considering factors that appear to reduce the likelihood of study abroad gains attriting, and also conditions that may make such erosion more likely.

The Boomerang Hypothesis

It is not uncommon in the social sciences for one term to have multiple meanings. The concept of a “boomerang hypothesis” is no exception. This term first appeared in the field of social psychology in the 1950s to describe a reaction to a persuasive message, prompting some receivers to act conversely to the message. It seems some social messages will be resisted, causing at least some to behave contrary to a desired outcome (Hovland, Janis & Kelly, 1953). Sensenig and Brehm (1968) regard boomerang effects as a type of anti-conformist “social reactance” against a perceived loss of freedom. This notion is illustrated in the film Harold and Maude (1971), in which the main character goes out of his way to do things his mother disapproves of. Research on boomerang effects is common in the drug abuse literature (Synder & Blood, 1992; MacKinnon & Lapin, 1998; Hornik, Jacobsohn, Orwin, Piesse, & Kalton, 2008). It has also been documented in other types of consumer behavior: appeals to consume product-X can sometimes backfire and lead to a preference for product-Y. Reverse psychology (MacDonald, Nail, & Harper, 2011) and paradoxical marketing – making a product difficult to obtain in order to increase the desire for it – (Brown, McDonagh, & Shultz, 2013) both skillfully attempt to manipulate boomerang effects.

In the field of study abroad, the boomerang hypothesis may have a different meaning. Rexeisen (2012-2013) describes it as a return to a baseline behavior and form of attrition. He conducted a longitudinal study of 139 American undergraduates who spent a semester abroad in London. Those respondents took Hammer and Bennett’s (2002) Intercultural Development Inventory (IDI) four months prior departure, just prior to returning home, and again four months after their return to the USA. Cross-cultural sensitivity as measured by that instrument improved significantly towards the end of the study abroad (SA) experience. However, after a semester home a significant erosion occurred: cross-cultural sensitivity declined to a level of almost no net improvement. The process by which short-term SA gains tend to erode over time in post-return settings can be described as a “boomerang effect.”

Rexeisen’s study focused on cross-cultural sensitivity, yet the erosion process he observed may prompt us to consider whether or not study abroad gains also tend to diminish over time. Let us consider some research supporting Rexeisen’s notion of a “boomerang effect” with other studies suggesting this may not be true under all conditions.

Studies in Favor

Cohen (1989)

Cohen explored the vocabulary attrition of his own children at one-month, three-month, and nine-month intervals after completing a one-year sojourn in Brazil. The children (aged 10 and 14) were asked to complete a picture-based storytelling task in Portuguese, and then in their native English and Hebrew. Their lexicon appeared to shrink over time. In particular, their ability to use nouns decreased. Interestingly, they could passively recognize many of the words that they were
unable to actively employ. Cohen also described how his children adopted various compensation strategies for their shrinking Portuguese language vocabulary. Increased reliance on their English and Hebrew L1s, circumlocution, and word approximation became more prevalent as their L2 vocabulary dwindled.

A cautionary note regarding this study is that childhood L2 attrition might not parallel adult L2 attrition. It should also be noted that his children’s L1 use also declined with each session. It is quite possible that the informants simply got bored of describing the same picture-story over and over. Despite this probable design artifact, Cohen suggests how L2 vocabulary loss can occur following an overseas sojourn, which can be interpreted as a “boomerang effect.”

Merino and Avello (2014)

In this study, a group of 28 Catalan/Spanish EFL learners and a group of 26 native speakers of English were examined for changes in intercultural awareness after a three-month study abroad period. The Catalan/Spanish speakers were university students who had completed a compulsory study abroad program in an English-speaking country, and the native English speakers were university students learning Spanish as a second language and participating in an exchange program in Spain. A composition test on the theme of adapting to the customs and way of life of a foreign country when living abroad was analyzed for positive indicators of intercultural awareness. The Spanish speakers were tested four times: when entering university, after a six-month formal instruction period in their home university, immediately after returning from their study abroad, and 15 months after their return. The native English speakers were tested once for comparison at the end of their study abroad in Spain.

Although no increase was found in the Spanish speakers after the formal instruction period at home, a significant number of learners in both groups showed positive intercultural awareness following the SA period. A subset of 18 Spanish speakers who were available for the delayed post-test 15 months later showed a reversion to the pre-study abroad level of intercultural awareness as measured by a Cochran’s Q analysis. The authors concluded that, “the positive short-term effects which had resulted from the SA experience were not maintained in the long run, given the absence of further immersion in the L2 community” (Merino & Avello, 2014, p.304).

As there was no formal instruction in intercultural awareness pre or post-SA for the participants in this study, it cannot be known whether the attitudinal gains could have been maintained with follow-up instruction on interculturality at home.

Fujio (forthcoming)

This study explored how two Japanese university students who participated in a one-month study abroad program in Canada appeared to change one year after returning to Japan. Specifically, it examined how their linguistic and strategic competence changed following their return, and how their pragmatic turn-taking style may have attrited. Whereas both respondents demonstrated many marked L2 improvements immediately after returning from study abroad, one year later their fluency (as measured by their word count per minute) regressed to nearly the pre-departure level. By contrast, Fujio maintains that sentence level complexity was “somewhat maintained.” In other words, students tended to produce longer sentences even one year after returning than prior to departure. However, their speech production rates tended to slow down. This study supports Rexeisen’s Boomerang Hypothesis in terms of fluency loss, but questions whether or not syntactic decay attrites so rapidly.

One limitation of this study was the way “complexity” was measured: the category “words only” could imply both pragmatically complete sentences with deictic elision such as “Good” as well as pragmatically incomplete phrases such as “The population . . . .” However, a particularly nice feature of this study is how it points out not all aspects of linguistic skill erode at the same rate.
Fujio also emphasized that the attrition process is not linear: substantial information can be forgotten in a short period of time.

**Counter Studies**

**Sasaki (2011)**

This 3.5 year longitudinal study explores the effects of SA on 37 Japanese English majors. Twenty-eight of those studied abroad in English-speaking countries for periods ranging from 1.5 to 11 months, while nine remained in Japan during the entire observational period. This research relied on three instruments. First, argumentative essays were collected once a year for four years, then rated independently and blindly by two EFL writing specialists according to Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel, and Hughey's (1981) *English Composition Profile*. Second, 30-minute interviews were conducted in Japanese "about their experiences related to English learning over the previous year" (p. 89) shortly after each essay was written. Finally, a 30-60 minute interview was held during each informant's fourth year to discuss their L2 motivation. Data was then interpreted in terms of models proposed by Dörnyei and Otto (1998), Kanno and Norton (2003), as well as Yang, Baba, and Cumming (2004).

Students who studied abroad for less than eight months tended to make short-term writing gains in their second and their years, but they regressed by their fourth years. By that point they had earned most of their required English credits and were then focusing mainly on job-hunting rather than English study. By contrast, Sasaki noted that students who spent more than eight months overseas appear to have become "intrinsically motivated" (p.100) English learners, voluntarily practicing their L2 writing. For those twelve individuals, L2 language loss did not appear to be occurring. This suggests that a “boomerang effect” may not be universal: for students who are extrinsically motivated to study English only to earn academic credits, it might in fact occur. However, those who reach a certain threshold and become motivated to interact with others in a target language are likely to continue learning.

One main limitation of this study is its modest sample size. Sasaki’s sample size would be more than adequate for a qualitative study, but it was arguably too modest for a quantitative approach. In addition, participants in this study who went abroad four months or more were required to achieve high TOEFL scores prior to departure. This may have motivated them to study more than others, representing a possible confounding factor.

Despite these limitations, Sasaki's study gives us a guardedly optimistic message that L2 attrition need not occur if SA participants reach a point at which they become intrinsically motivated as lifelong language learners. She also points out how "imagined communities" (p. 99) and socialization in L2 communities can have a decisive impact on L2 writing development. Sasaki's results prompt us to consider the L2 learning “ecology” metaphor espoused by Kramsch: instead of conceptualizing foreign language learning as a primarily cognitive activity, we need to remember “the dynamic interaction between language users and the environment as between parts of a living organism” (as sited in Sasaki, p. 103).

**Engstler (2012)**

The sound perception and speech production of seventeen American students of French who spent a semester in France was assessed at two-, five-, and nine-month intervals after their return to the USA. No evidence of language attrition was discerned during that time period. Indeed, the performance in some tasks such as AX discrimination (which can be likened to a minimal pair contrast) improved within that time frame. In terms of sound production, the only task that did not exhibit improvement in this time frame was word repetition: participants were better at accurately repeating the sounds of recorded French words shortly after returning from France. However, after 5 or 9 months in the USA, their pronunciation tended to be less accurate. The author concluded that,
overall “learning that takes place during an L2 immersion period seems to be robust for at least nine months after the end of the immersion period” (p. 93). Taken together, what the results suggest is that some aspects of foreign language learning (such as phonological awareness) resist erosion. However, other aspects (such as pronunciation) may be more prone to attrite in shorter time frames. This study provides further evidence of how not all L2 linguistic skills erode at the same rate.

The author conceded that this study might have had some selection bias: there was considerable competition for the SA slots, and the informants who participated in this study all tended to be highly motivated. When interpreting the results, we should remember that this study measured listening ability only in terms of AX minimal pairs. It would be incorrect to infer that particular type of sound discrimination accurately measures global listening ability.

Llanes (2012)

This study compared the written and oral English language proficiency of nine 11-year-old Catalan/ Spanish bilingual children who participated in a two-month study abroad program in Ireland with seven of their classmates who remained in Barcelona and continued regular instruction during the program. The study abroad participants received an average of six hours of classroom English exposure each week: four hours of English language classes and two hours of Science classes in English. All of the subjects completed a pre-test one week before the study abroad period, a post-test one week after the SA participants returned, and a delayed post-test 12 months after returning.

The tests included a 15-minute written composition; an interview consisting of biographical questions and a picture-elicited narrative task; and a questionnaire administered in Catalan/ Spanish to gain information on L2 practice and exposure. Written and oral skill development was determined using measures for written fluency (ratio words per T-unit), oral fluency (pruned syllables per minute), lexical complexity (Guiraud’s Index of Lexical Richness), syntactic complexity (ratio of clauses per T-unit), and accuracy (error-free T-units per T-unit).

The results showed that the SA participants experienced greater gains than the at home participants in the post-test, and the author noted that despite not being statistically significant, “SA participants still registered higher scores in the delayed post-test in most of the variables examined” (Llanes, 2011, p. 185). Although the number of participants in this study was low and, therefore, the results not generalizable, Llanes believes that this study suggests that gains made in a short-term study abroad program can be long lasting for children.

Newfields (2012)

This is a 27-month longitudinal case that juxtaposed the linguistic, socio-cultural, and virtual identities of two Japanese university students who participated in a three-week SA program to Britain in 2009. Using a contrastive convenience sample, one student who did particularly well during that SA experience (as determined by his grades) was compared with another with especially low marks. Based on a systematic analysis of their social network sites and a semi-structured interview two and a half years after their SA return, some striking contrasts were noted.

Whereas the first student was continuing to actively learn (and use) English, the second student essentially stopped learning when her SA program had finished. She did not identify herself as an English user. However, once or twice a year she would exchange messages in English with foreigners. To her, L2 correspondence was less threatening than direct L2 face-to-face encounters because it gave her plenty of time to consult her dictionary and confirm whether or not her grammar seemed correct. By contrast, the first student remarked how using English had become intrinsically fulfilling, and he regularly exploited opportunities to continue to learn that language. The Facebook sites of these two informants reflect the differences in the ways they position themselves vis-à-vis English: whereas Student A’s site contains about 35% English material, Student B’s site is solidly in Japanese.
For Student A, the initial SA experience became a springboard to engage in other English study opportunities. For Student B – who spent most of her time chatting with friends in her L1 while abroad – it was merely a touristic excursion that confirmed her belief that foreign languages were not her forte.

With only two informants, this study has obvious sampling limitations. Moreover, it often lacked detailed time markers and the structured interview should have been repeated several times to give a more precise picture of what sort of longitudinal changes occurred. Nonetheless, this study provides some evidence to suggest that SA linguistic and cultural gains do not necessarily erode.

**Conclusion**

This article has highlighted a few of the studies exploring the long-term effects of SA. Even a cursory overview of the literature suggests that some forms of linguistic attrition do tend to occur following an SA experience, but such attrition is not inevitable. In particular, those who are “intrinsically motivated” learners appear to be less likely to attrite than extrinsically motivated learners. Moreover, it would appear that those with robust L2 “imagined communities” and L2 networks of friends are less likely to attrite than those with very limited L2 social networks. Finally, there is evidence to support at least some variation of the Threshold Hypothesis (Neisser, 1984; Hansen, 1999), suggesting that L2 learners who have achieved a high degree of fluency in a target language are more impervious to what Rexeisen (2012-2013) would call a “boomerang effect.”

Conversely, it seems that SA participants with low-levels of L2 fluency, very limited social networks in the target language, and an extrinsic motivation to learn English only to obtain academic credits are more likely to lose many of the linguistic gains they have obtained from overseas study relatively rapidly. The extent to which they will lose other sorts of study abroad gains is an open question. As McKeown (2009, p. 91) has pointed out, many of the main benefits of SA appear to be in non-linguistic domains. Changes in participants’ attitudes towards the host country they visited and/or towards multiculturalism in general might last significantly longer than the specific vocabulary items or grammatical structures that they have learned.

**References**


Japan Association for Language Teaching Study Abroad SIG

http://jalt-sa.org/PDF/7-2Hubert-Newfields.pdf
Language, Identity and Study Abroad: Sociocultural Perspectives
by Jane Jackson
ISBN-13 (Hardback) 9781845531416
(Paperback) 9781845531423

This is a qualitative research study involving four female university students from Hong Kong with varying levels of English ability. The students participated in a five-week study abroad (SA) programme in the U.K. as well as a one-semester pre-departure orientation and a series of post-return activities over one semester. The book is organized in a pattern similar to many ethnographic studies with an introduction, literature review, study description, and discussion of possible research implications. From a cohort of 15 English majors who participated in a 2004 SA programme, the author selected a contrastive sample of four individuals venturing overseas for the first time. Drawing from their diary entries, language use logs, interviews, surveys, essays, group interaction sessions, as well as her own field notes, Jackson highlights how SA experiences vary widely from participant to participant. Although some readers might feel bogged down by some theoretical discussions in this text, its case studies offer compelling narratives of how complex linguistic, social, cultural, political, and psychological factors shape SA experiences.

Audience

This volume will most appeal to those organizing, chaperoning, or teaching in SA programmes. It might also interest researchers in cross-cultural communication, sociolinguistics, and second language acquisition. Jackson, who has been teaching intercultural communication, language, culture and research classes at the Chinese University of Hong Kong since 1995, wrote this book with two objectives. The first is to explore “the relationship of identity to intercultural communicative competence” (p.11) and relate this with poststructuralist concepts such as ‘outsideness’ (Bakhtin, 1981), ‘encapsulated marginality’ (Bennett, 1993), and ‘thirdspace’ (Bhabha, 1994, Kransch, 1999). A second aim of this text is to give voice to SA participants, illustrating “the complex, deeply personal processes of language and cultural learning and identity (re)construction.” Her use of first-person narratives makes the theoretical concepts easier to grasp.

Theoretical Grounding

Although Jackson strives to transcend the gulf between theory and praxis and frankly acknowledges no single theory can adequately account for SA outcomes (p. 198), she nonetheless provides a pastiche of current views concerning language, culture, and identity. Ways that Vygotsky, Bakhtin, Bourdieu, and others have shaped poststructuralist notions of identity, language, and culture are briefly highlighted. Detailed information about identity negotiation theory (Ting-Toomey, 1999, 2005), which provides the main theoretical backbone of this work, is provided. Those interested in knowing how SA might impact identity should become acquainted with the core assumptions of that theory, which are summarized online by Ting-Toomey and Dorjee (2014).
Readers who have already studied socio-linguistics can probably skim through Chapters 2 and 3. Novice readers might prefer texts such as Baldwin, Coleman, González, and Shenoy-Packer's *Intercultural Communication for Everyday Life* (2014) or the author’s *Introducing Language and Intercultural Communication* (2014).

**Some Pros and Cons**

One nice feature of Jackson’s work is that it relies on thick descriptions of how each SA participant changed over a 22-month period. Another admirable feature is how the informants’ experiences are often linked with existing theories. A third feature we found particularly appealing about this book was its description of possible pre-departure and post-return activities. To her credit, Jackson also does a good job of weaving the various themes of this book together in its final two chapters. She emphasizes how personal traits such as resilience to stress, tolerance of ambiguity, and willingness to step outside of familiar norms can often shape SA outcomes. At the same time, she emphasizes how supportive host families, well-designed SA programmes, and competent staff in fostering student growth can also foster student growth. Jackson reminds us that merely placing SA participants in a host speech community will not necessarily result in significant linguistic or cultural learning. It takes a lot of work and “a significant investment” (p. 218) from all major stakeholders for SA to be successful.

Two methodological concerns about this book are worth mentioning. The first was about coding: all of the data was coded solely by the author-researcher. According to Gorden (1992, p. 180), a better practice would have at least two researchers do some kind of independent coding. A second concern – and problem common to many cross-cultural studies – was about the translation protocols: part of Jackson’s data was in Cantonese and unfortunately the translation protocols were not explicit. Indeed, it is sometimes unclear what language the informants were using and/or whether any English errors had been corrected.

**The Bottom Line**

The book provides lucid etic and emic descriptions of four SA participants. Since all of the participants were highly motivated female English majors with GPAs of 3.3 or higher and C1 and C2 CEFR levels prior to departure, it should be remembered that they differ in many ways from Japanese tertiary norms. Nonetheless, some common threads that run through many experiences described in this text also shed light on what many Japanese overseas sojourners experience. Time-constrained teachers and administrators wanting practical advice about how to run SA programmes may wish to focus on the final two chapters of this book. Others desiring to get a better handle on the overall theory may find Ting-Toomey and Chung’s *Intercultural Communication* (2011) (as well as the previously mentioned texts) a more approachable introduction. For those in between, however, curious about SA participant perspectives and also wanting to bridge the interface between theory and narrative, this work provides thoughtful reading.

- Reviewed by Allan Goodwin & Tim Newfields
Works Cited


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全国語学教育学会研修研究会

http://jalt-sa.org/PDF/7-2Goodwin-Newfields.pdf
Mr. Eiki Satori is the vice principal and admissions manager for the Tokyo-based Affinity English Academy (AEA) and a part-time lecturer at Toyo Eiwa Women’s University. He has a M.S. in English education from Syracuse University and a M.Ed. degree from the College of New Jersey. He has produced educational materials for ALC and Agos, and since 2012 has worked for AEA. As a graduate admissions counselor there, he manages about thirty-five applicants annually, assisting them in advancing their careers through overseas graduate studies. This interview was conducted by email during October 2014 in English and Japanese.

**How did you first become interested in study abroad?**

I had a sense of discomfort about following the same path as my peers. The idea of studying abroad had interested me from a young age. Distinguishing myself from others was one of the core motivations behind my decision to study abroad.

**Where did you study abroad? Could you tell us about your experience?**

I studied at Syracuse University in New York and The College of New Jersey. Through these experiences, I eventually decided to specialize in global education. In my graduate studies, I conducted research on context-based literacy instruction in Japanese and US classrooms in secondary education. Further interactions with language education specialists in local and international communities encouraged me to compare and analyze different aspects of English and Japanese both culturally and linguistically.

**Could you tell us more about the company you are working for now? How does it differ from other study abroad companies?**

Affinity English Academy (AEA) was founded in Yokohama in 2007 and has since grown to a staff of ten. Since 2012, I’ve been working in the application preparation program jointly with the founder of AEA, Mr. Tetsuya Noguchi. The majority of our students are business people aiming to obtain graduate level M.B.A., L.L.M., M.A., M.S., M.Ed., or Ph.D. degrees overseas.

AEA’s educational philosophy is not to impose the idea that study abroad is the best option for everyone. We offer a career counseling service known as the “Life Career Counseling Program.” I’m a certified career consultant endorsed by the Japan Industrial Counselors Association (Nihon Sangyō Kaunserō Kyōkai). I serve as both an admissions counselor and career consultant in
this program. Since graduate school admissions essays (i.e., the Statement of Purpose or Personal Statement) usually require applicants to demonstrate a strong motivation to meet their personal and professional objectives, my key responsibility is to help our students recognize whether studying abroad would provide them with the best opportunity to achieve their objectives before starting to tackle standardized examinations such as the TOEFL, IELTS, GMAT, or GRE.

From your perspective, has there been a change in the way most Japanese approach study abroad since the collapse of Japan’s economic bubble in 1991?

I noticed that ten years ago, Japanese applicants used to place priority on “just” studying abroad or living overseas. With the development of social networking services such as Facebook and Twitter, Japanese now spend more time looking for suitable programs for their academic needs. Most importantly, study abroad applicants anticipate receiving a very high quality education that will enhance their careers after graduate school. In particular, private-sponsored applicants to graduate school tend to apply to only the most highly rated programs. I call this an “all-or-nothing application strategy.”

What are some common misconceptions about study abroad among Japanese you have worked with?

While students are somewhat aware that study abroad is not the best way to solve all their problems, many still tend to rely on it as a panacea to change their lives. Many tend to seek quick tangible effects such as a high TOEIC or TOEFL scores to gain an edge on college entrance exams or job searches. Therefore, I constantly ask them to think of the intangible benefits that can be gained from a variety of study abroad environments. Based upon my personal and professional experiences, I strongly believe that such intangible elements are necessary elements for personal growth when learning in multi-cultural environments. Last of all, I have to remember that study abroad will enable my clients not only to achieve academic goals including language development, but also to encourage personal growth in diverse social contexts.

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http://jalt-sa.org/PDF/7-2Satori(E).pdf
海外留学の展望

佐取永基氏へのインタビュー

Karen Yabuno

佐取永基氏は、海外の大学院でキャリアアップを目指す留学生を支援する Affinity English Academy (AEA) Tokyo の副校長である。また、東洋英和女学院大学・国際社会学部の非常勤講師も務める。彼は、カレッジ・オブ・ニューポリスとして日本語教育と英語教授法の修士号を取得後、ニューヨーク州シラキュース大学で教育学博士号を取得した。その後、(株)アルクで国際教育プログラムのプロデュースを経て、2001年から、アゴス・ジャパンでMBA、LL.M.などの留学準備指導や学校情報データベースの作成に携わってきた。AEAには、2012年より参画する。

このインタビューは、2014年10月に電子メールによって行われた。

最初に留学に興味を持たれたのは、どのようなきっかけでしたか？

これまで私は「成長したい」という願いを一貫して持ち続けてきました。周囲の友人と同じ道程を歩むことに幾度となく違和感を感じたこともあります。そうした意識が、やがて私は留学の道へと後押ししてくれたのだと思います。

留学先での経験について教えてくださいませんか？

私の留学経験を話す上で、ニューヨーク州のシラキュース大学、そしてカレッジ・オブ・ニューポリスでの体験は欠かせません。そこで得た経験が、その後、私がグローバル教育分野でキャリアを積んでいきたいと考えるベースとなっています。大学院時代は、識字能力開発を目的とした中学、高校で展開される英語指導法の研究に従事しました。また、地元や国際舞台で活躍する言語教育の専門家との交流は、私の日本語と英語に関する文化や言語学的問題を比較分析する上で、とても役に立ちました。

現在、副校長をされる Affinity English Academy の背景を教えてくださいませんか。他の留学を紹介する組織とは、どう違いますか？

2007年に野口哲也氏が創設した Affinity English Academy で10名のメンバーと共に、留学希望者を対象にした出願指導プログラムの運営をしています。当学院の大多数の受講生は、MBA(経営学修士)やLL.M.(法学修士)、更にはその他の専門修士課程(文学修士、理学修士、教育学修士)や博士課程(Ph.D.)等のプログラムへの留学希望者です。

当学院の指導方針は、「受講希望者に対し留学自体を押し付けないこと」を軸としています。(社)日本産業カウンセラー協会より認定されたキャリア・コンサルタントでもある私は、そうした方針を推進するため、に“ライフキャリア・カウンセリング”という独自のプログラムを提供しています。つまり、私はアドミッションズ・カウンセラーでもあり、時としてキャリア・コンサルタントの役目も担います。大学や大学院に出願するエッセイには、出願者の留学目的や留学後の目標を明確に書き記さなければならない。留学に必要
なテスト（TOEFL, IELTS, GMAT や GRE）の対策に注力する前に、留学そのものが、自らの目標を達成するための最適な手段であるか否かをいち早く認識してもらうこと、それが私に課せられる主な仕事です。

1991年のバブル崩壊以降、日本人の海外留学に対する考え方はどのように変化したか？

SNSの発達により、我々の受講生も個々の教育ニーズを満たすため、より多くの適切な情報にアクセスする機会を得ています。そうした中で見られる傾向として、彼等は卒業後のキャリア開発のために、最高水準の教育を求めていることです。特に資金援助が得られない留学希望者層は、自分がにとって最適な大学院にのみ、出願する傾向が強く、私はこれを"all-or-nothing application strategy"と呼んでいます。10年前に私の元へ留学相談に来られた方々には、実際のところ"留学すること"や"海外に住むこと"を（教育内容以上）重視する留学希望者が多く見られました。

ご経験から海外留学の一番の効果は、何だとお考えですか。

留学希望者は心の何処かで、"留学は全ての問題を解決する万能薬ではない"という事を理解はしているものの、いざ自分の現状を変えるために、目に見える効果を留学に求める傾向が依然として、見られます。具体的には、進学や就職活動を有利にするために、留学経験を生かし、TOEICやTOEFLスコアの向上へと役立てるにみ重きを置くケースが多くあります。そうした中で、私は留学経験から得られる無形の効果、要素、リソース、価値について考えるようにアドバイスをしています。私の留学経験や留学指導者の立場から考えると、留学を通じて得られる（それらの）無形なものこそ、個人的成长に欠かせないものだと思います。すなわち、個々の留学経験は、語学力を向上させたり、学術目的を達成させるだけではなく、日々の社会生活の中で、個人の成長をサポートします。私は「個人の成長の場としての留学」なという大事なメッセージをこれからも発信していきたいと思います。

Japan Association for Language Teaching Study Abroad SIG

全国語学教育学会研修研究会

http://jalt-sa.org/PDF/7-2Satori(J).pdf
This book weaves together three ideas: second language identity, narrative, and study abroad. It provides case study narratives of one graduate, seven undergraduate, and two secondary students from Hong Kong studying overseas for periods ranging from ten days to two years. Unfortunately, it lacks “thick descriptions” of when the informants made their statements, who they were communicating with, how the data was coded, or even how the informants were selected. As such, I feel it is of limited value in terms of research methodology. However, this text does provide a useful overview of some of the theoretical ideas that are currently used to explain how (and why) many persons studying abroad change in terms of the ways they see themselves and the world around them. Let me briefly examine some of its core concepts, then evaluate the text overall.

Second Language Identity

This text embraces a post-structuralist view of identity. Adopting notions from Harré’s (2001) model of “three selves” as well as ideas from Markus and Nurius (1986), the authors propose a six-faceted model of identity. This model certainly has heuristic value, though it seems problematic in some respects. For example, a category of “imagined past” (often in the form of a narrative) is missing. To me it seems that a person’s “imagined past” is at least as important as their “imagined future.”

Benson, Barkhuizen, Bodycott, and Brown describe second language identity as, “any aspect of a person’s identity that is related to their knowledge and use of a second language” (p. 17) and acknowledge it as a “complex, multidimensional construct . . . [that] varies according to context” (p. 2). They emphasize the organic, evolving nature of second language identity and how critical experiences (both positive and negative) can shift axes of identity. Asserting that self-concepts are linguistically structured, the authors also claim that, “second language learning necessarily impinges on the learner’s identity” (p. 29). Moreover, they encourage us to consider language not merely as a code, but also a ‘meaning-making system’ (Kramsch, 2009, p. 2). For this reason they affirm that using different languages also invariably involves enacting new identities - or at the very least modifying existing ones.

Narratives

The authors portray narratives as a sort of ‘glue’ that holds various fragmented aspects of our identities together. Narratives are, in their view, “a means of organising pieces of information that would otherwise lack coherence into meaningful sequences of events” (p. 24). Citing Bruner (2001, p. 34), they remind us that narratives are not merely individual or private affairs: there is a complex interplay between a person’s self-adopted scripts and how others react to their stories.

For those learning a foreign language, it is argued that narratives play a decisive role in determining how learners interface with a target language and in their learning outcomes. The authors assert that each language learner carries a “story” about their previous learning experiences that plays a
significant role in shaping their future learning expectations and outcomes. Hence, educators should attempt to help learners become more aware of their personal narratives, recognize how they are both similar and different from the narratives of others, and finally help learners “reinterpret” or modify their given narratives in ways that enable learners to more readily achieve their desired outcomes.

**Study Abroad**

The ten narratives in this text present a broad range of study abroad experiences. The authors highlight how various study abroad components such as program length, degree of interaction with the host community, and academic content shape study abroad outcomes. At the same time, they underscore that “individual [personality] differences may lead to very different outcomes for students who participate in the same [study abroad] programme” (p. 4). In other words, study abroad involves multi-faceted variables, making the results difficult to predict with certainty.

One thing I particularly like about this book is how it emphasizes the need for well-grounded pre-departure and post-return orientation to orient students to life overseas and, upon return, help them critically evaluate their experiences. At the end of this text the core features of an effective study abroad programme are aptly summarized:

> An effective study abroad program identifies, explores, builds, and supports second language identity understanding and development. It is one that encourages and supports intercultural development at all levels, and provides opportunities to practice and develop autonomy and decision-making. It elicits and revisits the programme and personal purposes and goals of study abroad. It provides individual students with the personal, social, and linguistic and academic support they need before, during and on return from their study abroad experience. (p. 161)

**Some Pros and Cons**

In my view, this book has three just limitations. The first concerns its underlying design structure. The data for this study came from (1) a one hour pre-departure interview with each informant in Cantonese and/or English by a research assistant, (2) periodic digital contact by that assistant while the participants were abroad, and (3) a one hour interview shortly after their return. As such, no information about the long-term effects of study abroad is outlined in this study. Moreover, the method of communicating with informants by various digital channels in Step (2) might lead to different projected identities: some individuals might project “virtual selves” on their public Facebook pages that are quite different from their private emails.

Sampling is another limitation to consider. Nine of the ten informants were female. If we regard study abroad as a “gendered experience” (Coleman, 2013, p. 34), then this text can offer only limited insights into how male participants might regard that experience. Moreover, with the exception of one informant who was forced to study abroad because of a program requirement, all informants in this study were highly motivated to study overseas. As such, this text does not shed light on how less proficient English users (or those going abroad for mainly touristic motives) tend to regard their overseas experiences.

Finally, the narrative approach in this volume - derived from the insights of Polkinghorne (1995) and Josselson (2006) - is something I was not entirely comfortable with. I should acknowledge a theoretical bias in favor of more grounded, mixed method, or quantitative research. In my view, this 188-page text does not provide enough information about who is constructing the narratives and what information is being used from which specific contexts. In other words, the implicit data is not so clearly linked to the explicit narratives. Had the authors adopted a critical participatory looping procedure recommended by Murphey and Falout (2010), I would feel more assured about the overall
integrity of the narratives in this volume. However, this important step appears to be missing from the research. Although the stories claim to be emic accounts, the way that they were constructed has a distinctly etic flavor.

By contrast, two things about this text seem particularly exemplary. First, I very much like the way that exploratory questions precede the narratives. Those questions prime readers to focus on certain discourse threads and help them scaffold the material appearing later. Second, the advice about study abroad programs in Chapter 9 has a handy practical focus. Program administrators who are pressed for time might find that chapter most valuable.

The Bottom Line

It is tempting to compare this text with Jackson’s 2008 text reviewed in this issue of *Ryūgaku*. Both volumes focus on students from Hong Kong and employ narrative analyses. However, Jackson is more explicit about the methodological procedures informing her research. One advantage of this text is that it provides a more up-to-date overview of the literature on study abroad, identity, and language learning. If readers are mainly interested in theoretical perspectives, however, other texts such as Block (2007) or many articles featured in the *Journal of Language, Identity, and Education* also offer excellent lucid descriptions.

Overall, my recommendation for this text is rather lukewarm. It is probably of particular value to study abroad administrators in Hong Kong and/or those with a keen interest in narrative theory and/or identity theory. For those in Japan or who have somewhat varied interests, a brief skim through this text should probably suffice.

- Reviewed by Tim Newfields

Works Cited


