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English Villages and the Study Abroad Experience: Does Authenticity Matter?

Sam Morris and Andy Lankshear
(British Hills)

Abstract

English villages (EVs) have been adopted throughout Asia as a potential alternative to study abroad programmes, with Tokyo the latest city to announce plans for a facility. However, despite such investment, EVs remain under-researched, and the discourse surrounding them tends to be dominated by criticism into their lack of authenticity in relation to the study abroad experience. In this paper, the authors challenge the criticisms of authenticity imposed upon English villages in academic discourse, and argue that the arguments therein distract from a discussion of any positive roles they may be able to play in language learning. The authors make suggestions for future research that is needed to generate a deeper understanding of how EVs may help support English learners.

Keywords: English villages, immersion, study abroad, authenticity, ELT.

Recently the Tokyo Metropolitan Government outlined plans to build English village (EV) facilities in the capital for school-aged English learners (Tokyo ‘English Village’, 2014). Such facilities have already been adopted to varying degrees in Korea (Trottier, 2008), Taiwan (Gluck, 2007) and Japan (British Hills Co. Ltd., 2014), with the Korean government investing particularly heavily in them.

The concepts of “studying abroad” and “authenticity” are often evoked in promotional literature for English villages. For example, the website of Gyeonggi English Camp in Korea (Kim, 2014) states that “[the camp] is to decrease the financial burdens of private English education and the need to send children overseas for language and culture education through local immersion programs providing authentic cultural [sic] and English language”. Furthermore, the website of British Hills in Japan (British Hills Co. Ltd., 2014) explains that: “the founder and the first board chairperson visualised a language learning facility that could provide the experience of studying abroad to students unable to do so for economic reasons”.

Unsurprisingly, given these claims, there has been a noticeable amount of negative discourse published on the authenticity of the English village experience (Krashen, 2006; Seargeant, 2005). At present, little empirical research has been conducted on EVs to ascertain whether a comparison with study abroad programmes is either appropriate or necessary, and the authors believe that the question of EV authenticity is an unfortunate distraction from meaningful consideration of the benefits they may be able to provide. This article aims, within its small scope, to challenge the criticisms of authenticity aimed at EVs. For a fuller discussion on some of the other criticisms levied against English villages (such as cost/benefit issues) please see Trottier (2008). Accordingly, we hope to clear the way for more productive future discourse and research.

The English village experience

English villages are language learning facilities, defined by their enactment of a simulated environment which integrates aspects of foreign culture with language teaching. They generally
include western architecture and food, and often have a variety of shops, restaurants and hotel facilities that enable learners to immerse themselves in some sort of English-only atmosphere (Seargeant, 2005).

The majority of EV facilities have arisen independently of each other and, to date, there has been no comparison of the programmes they offer. Accordingly, here we consider the experience offered by British Hills, an EV located in the southern part of Fukushima prefecture and the facility in which the authors teach.

British Hills was established in 1994 by the Sano Educational Foundation; the owners of the prominent language educational establishments Kanda University of International Studies and Kanda Institute of Foreign Languages. British Hills is modelled on a British village, with a manor house, pub, tea room and shop, and was built using materials imported from the UK. The official language is English, and there are more than 30 native English speaking staff working as teachers, hotel staff and restaurant staff. The vast majority of visitors to British Hills are junior and senior high school students from the Kanto and Tohoku areas, who attend for short (2-4 day) intensive language courses. The students take a mixture of English language, culture and experiential classes (sport, craft and cooking), and are able to interact in English outside of the classroom, for example when shopping, using the hotel facilities and using the restaurants. In 2013, British Hills had more than 36,000 guest nights (typically, one student accounts for two guest nights) and approximately 15,000 day visitors.

**Criticisms of authenticity levied against English villages**

Authenticity is multifaceted, thus criticisms of authenticity have varying points of origin and focus. Published literature has criticised English villages for the inauthenticity of their culture (Seargeant, 2005), the inauthenticity of their symbolic positioning of the English language (Seargeant, 2005), and the inauthenticity of their environments (Krashen, 2006). Here we address each of these issues in turn.

Firstly, Seargeant (2005) has criticised the inauthenticity of the culture presented by EVs. Seargeant argues that the selective hiring practices and the restriction of languages other than English create an idealised portrayal of the cultures which EVs aim to imitate, and misrepresent most modern multicultural societies. British Hills does suppress languages other than English, and hires native English speaking staff from countries not limited to Britain. However, there is no empirical evidence to suggest that learners leave EVs under the impression they have spent time in an authentic foreign culture. As such, we argue that this opinion is at best, without foundation, and at worst, insensitive to the ability of Japanese learners of English to recognise the differences between a small replica village in the mountains of Japan and the real Britain that they see regularly on the internet, film, and television. In addition, staff at EVs are able to mitigate such issues in their ‘border practices’ (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011, p. 143-144), in those occasions where they venture to make connections between the EV and authentic English interactions. At British Hills, staff regularly reference imagined future business, academic, and personal English settings during classes and closing addresses, which support learners in the process of reflecting on the authenticity of their British Hills course and extrapolating their experiences onto an imagined future self.
Secondly, Seargeant’s concerns also stem from the consequences of EVs on language ideology: “by symbolically positioning English outside the boundary of mainstream society and creating purpose-built enclaves within which to accommodate it, the perception is created that the language is forever foreign” (Seargeant, 2005, p. 342). While British Hills can indeed be considered a language enclave, the positioning of English as something ‘other’ is not unique to the facility. Within the Japanese context, this criticism has also been addressed towards the national language policy of the “Strategic Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English abilities.” (MEXT, July 2001 cited in Honna & Takeshita, 2005, p. 364). As the authors noted, the wording of the policy is suggestive of the Japanese government wanting its citizens to be cultivated with English as an addition, rather than an infusion, thus distancing the English language from an imagined national characteristic. Additionally, such a criticism could be levied at the JET programme, where assistant language teachers are often marginalised as something exotic and ‘other’ rather than integrated and valued as agents of change (McConnell, 2000). This criticism of distancing is therefore not unique to EVs, and we contend that it should not be discussed as an issue for EVs only, but as a problem for language teaching in Japan in general.

Finally, Stephen Krashen (2006) appeared to take issue with the innate inauthenticity of the EV environment in a highly critical open letter to the *Taipei Times* on the use of EVs within Korea. He wrote, “the villages are not real, the buildings are simulations of banks, post offices, airline offices and the like, and the interactions are simulations” (p. 1). Krashen’s description of EV facilities is accurate, however as Trottier (2008) noted in a rebuttal paper, the implication of such a criticism is the suggestion that all simulated environments, including classrooms, are inherently unsuitable for English learning. Clearly the classroom has an important role to play in second language acquisition and Krashen himself has comprehensively praised their use in his work on the monitor hypothesis: “If we fill our second language classrooms with input that is optimal for acquisition, it is quite possible that we can actually do better than the informal environment, at least up until the intermediate level” (Krashen, 1982, p. 58). It therefore seems clear that the question of authenticity of the environment of an EV is moot when considering them in the context of language learning as a whole.

**Future research**

The criticisms of authenticity described above have dogged EVs since their inception, and have inevitably clouded discussion over how they can best be utilised to support language learning. Given the forthcoming increased investment in EV facilities, it is clear that research and discussion should also focus on the positive impact that EVs may have on learners.

The relaxed and supportive settings of English villages have been recognised as a “distinguishing feature” (Trottier, 2008, p. 73), as has their use of content-based instruction, which is able to create motivation and a genuine need to communicate (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). English villages such as British Hills may well be a rich environment for simulated language tasks akin to or exceeding those that are possible in the language classroom, and likely offer substantial opportunities for transactional authenticity, given that English is used to complete actual financial transactions, to order real food and to deliver meaningful content regarding schedules and lessons in English. In a forthcoming paper, the lead author aims to provide evidence to contend that EV
experiences may contribute to the lowering of learner anxiety, and we certainly believe that research into the impact of EVs on learner affect is one fruitful research direction.

**Conclusions**

English villages have been criticised for the authenticity of their culture, language ideology and environment, but given that such criticisms could generally be just as easily applied to many language learning environments, the authors contend that the negative discourse over authenticity detracts from a meaningful discussion of the potential benefits of English villages for language learners and other stakeholders. The kind of empirical inquiry needed to engage in such a dialogue is unfortunately lacking, but is urgently required to better understand the potential benefits of facilities such as those being proposed in Tokyo.

**References**


First, a point of clarification is in order. In this text, "sojourn" and "residence abroad" do not refer to extended periods of overseas residency. Instead, these terms underscore the varied ways that even short-term foreign visitors can interact within non-indigenous host communities. Whereas "study abroad" is a term with a clear intellectual and academic focus, Jackson prefers terms such as "residence abroad" and "overseas sojourns" to highlight some of the experiences that may occur both in and out of formal class. Hence, this study is not about persons who've spent months or years overseas – it focuses on how a small group of Chinese university students changed after a short 5-week stay in the U.K. This 251-page text provides emic and etic accounts of how one study abroad program appears to have impacted the informants in terms of intercultural competence, identity construction, as well as English proficiency. Before outlining the results of this study, let's briefly look at the methodology underlying it.

**Methodology**

A contrastive sample of four undergraduate English majors from the Chinese University of Hong Kong with no prior overseas experience was selected as this study's main informants from a cohort of 14 participants. The main informants were all female, native Cantonese users, and with B1 or B2 CEFR English proficiency levels.

This study employed six qualitative research instruments: (1) the informants' study abroad application letters, (2) their pre-departure journal entries, language use logs, and student surveys, (3) one semi-structured bilingual pre-departure interview, (4) frequent pre-sojourn, sojourn, and post-sojourn observation field notes, (5) one post-return survey, and (6) a semi-structured post-return interview in the language of the informant's choice. Despite the small number of informants in this study, the author also employed one quantitative tool: Hammer, Bennett, and Wiseman's revised Intercultural Development Inventory (2003). This 50-item scale with a 5-choice Likert response format reutes to measure ethno-centricism and ethno-relativism according to Bennett's Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (1993).

All informants took three different semester-length pre-departure orientation classes focusing on literary studies, ethnographic research, and intercultural communication prior to their 5-week overseas experience. The author taught two of those classes, and also served as a research advisor while the participants were in England. Their sojourn included a homestay, morning ESL classes, and regular cultural excursions. Students were required to keep diaries and also complete periodic reflections. An "English only" policy was established for this sojourn, and informants generally refrained from using Cantonese. Upon returning to Hong Kong, the author supervised a semester-length writing project for this cohort. Students were required to write a 30-page dissertation in English and they conferred with the author on a weekly basis during that period. Jackson used an open coding framework via NVivo (Ver. 7) to organize the varied data from this study.

The Intercultural Development Inventory was administered to all 14 program participants three times: once before the pre-departure training, then again when it ended, and finally just after this cohort returned to Hong Kong.
Results

Interpreting the quantitative *Intercultural Development Inventory* scores changes is problematic since the standard error of measurement of that scale is not reported, nor are any of the confidence intervals or detailed descriptive statistics. The actual inventory items themselves are not public for commercial reasons, making independent validation difficult. The issue of sample size is also relevant: a cohort sampling over several years may have been the best way to obtain valid and reliable data. For these reasons, we shall limit our discussion to the qualitative results.

A wide range of findings concerning L1/L2 identity formation, cross-cultural understanding, and language utilization are summarized in this text. Towards the end of this volume, the author concludes:

intercultural communication/ethnography courses and short-term sojourns, when carefully planned and sequenced, can have a positive impact on student development (e.g. sociopragmatic awareness, enhanced cultural knowledge).

With adequate sojourn preparation, students can become more systematic language and cultural learners and, ultimately, enhance their intercultural competence. (p. 186)

Although Jackson affirms that, "a short-term sojourn with systematic predeparture, experiential elements, guided critical reflection, and ongoing support can have a positive impact on L2 students who have a high level of ethnocentrism on entry" (p. 137), she also points out how outcomes vary widely among participants. A willingness to interact within a new culture, to learn from mistakes, and engage with those from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds are some of the variables appearing to shape sojourn outcomes.

Some Pros and Cons

There are three particularly nice features to this book. First, it relies on thick descriptions of how each SA participant changed over a nine-month period. It was interesting to read different sojourner accounts of the same events. Second, Jackson's probing questions offer a lot to think about regarding study abroad program design. Study abroad program organizers and intercultural researchers will appreciate much of this volume's practical advice. Finally, the main theoretical framework behind this study is explained in detail, integrating abstract descriptions with concrete sojourner experiences.

This work also has at least three limitations. First, Jackson's *sampling* differs from most study abroad programs in Japan. Her informants were generally fluent in English, with high grade point averages, and perhaps more motivated to study overseas than most Japanese university students. If we regard study abroad as a gendered experience (Twombly, 1995, par. 3), the fact that all core informants were female should also be considered when interpreting these results. Male sojourners might have somewhat different experiences from the young women portrayed in this study.

A second limitation of this study is its *timeframe*. This study extends just one semester after the informant's return from England. In light of Rexeisen's *Boomerang Hypothesis* (2012-2013), we need to consider the possibility of attrition: at least some of the program participants are likely to return to presojourn baseline behaviors.

Third, as Sutin (2011, p. 308) pointed out when reviewing this text, some of the theoretical concepts mentioned herein are explained rather briefly. For those already familiar with the SA literature, this issue is inconsequential. However, novice readers may be perplexed by references to concepts such as Bryam's (1997) *savoirs* or Bourdieu's (1977, 1991) *habitus*. Those seeking a firmer theoretical grounding of these and other related concepts are encouraged to read Jackson's 2013 text.

The Bottom Line

It is natural to compare this work with Jackson's 2008 text. Whereas both books highlight the experiences of a small number of students from a university in Hong Kong to Great Britain, this
text offers more detailed descriptions of the study abroad program's pre-sojourn and post-sojourn components. It also provides a more comprehensive list of research tools. Not surprisingly, the references on topics such as linguistic identity and code-switching are more recent. As such, we feel this book probably is of more practical value to those planning to do study abroad research. In short, this work is worth reading for those interested in conducting SA research or administering study abroad programs. Japan-based readers will likely need to offer more linguistic affordances to their programs than Jackson employed. Those lacking the time to read this entire book from cover to cover will find the final two chapters particularly helpful.

- Reviewed by Allan Goodwin & Tim Newfields

Works Cited


Study Abroad Perspectives: An Interview with Prof. Jane Jackson

by Allan Goodwin

Jane Jackson is a Professor in the English Department at the Chinese University of Hong Kong. She received her PhD in applied linguistics from the University of Toronto and a Masters in Education from the University of Calgary. Prof. Jackson has authored numerous articles, book chapters and books on intercultural communication, pragmatics, internationalization, education abroad, English for specific purposes, and identity transformation. Her publications include Language, Identity, and Study Abroad: Socio-Cultural Perspectives (2008) and in 2012 she edited the Routledge Handbook of Intercultural Communication. In addition to teaching in Hong Kong, she has held academic positions in Canada, Egypt, Oman, and the United States. She is on the editorial board of numerous journals and is a fellow and board member of the International Academy for Intercultural Research. This interview was conducted by email in April 2015.

Perhaps a good way to start off this interview would be to mention how you became interested in cross-cultural issues and study abroad.

Looking back, I guess my interest in study abroad and intercultural communication started in secondary school. Near the end of my secondary schooling in Canada, I joined a French immersion program, and, as an undergraduate, I also participated in a ‘Junior Year Abroad’ program in Québec that was designed for second-language speakers of French. All of my courses were in French, including some that focused on the local culture and it was a really good experience. Also, my roommates were French-Canadian university students and this gave me a taste of homestay life. As this sojourn happened long before the Internet, I had a real immersion experience and largely lived in French. I’ve always been interested in learning additional languages, and cultural elements are intertwined with language learning. As an undergraduate, I majored in bilingual education (French-English) and cultural elements were also naturally embedded in many of my courses.

I love to travel and have worked in many countries/regions, and this has also enhanced my interest in cross-cultural issues and study abroad. After teaching at the American University in Cairo, Egypt, I went to the University of Toronto (Ontario Institute for Studies in Education) to do my Ph.D. in applied linguistics/cross-cultural communication. As part of that coursework, I studied cross-cultural communication and my research centered on communication in cross-cultural/second language medical interviews. Basically, in a hospital setting, I looked at interactions between ethnic Chinese patients (second language speakers of English) and their physicians who were white, first-language speakers of English. Since then, I have spent a lot of time outside my home country, Canada. As well as Egypt, I have worked in the United States, the Sultanate of Oman, Mainland China, the United Kingdom, and Hong Kong.

I have been in the English Department at the Chinese University of Hong Kong for nearly twenty years and have created intercultural communication courses at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. The first course I designed was an introductory language and intercultural communication course for undergraduates. In 2001, my Department began to offer the Special English Stream (SES) (a study abroad program for our top English majors), and due, in part, to my background in cross-cultural communication I was asked to develop the curriculum and supervise the students’ research projects in the U.K.

For more than fifteen years, I’ve been doing research on study abroad learning and this has become my primary focus. I began by investigating the developmental trajectories of SES participants via ethnographic case studies; since 2009, I’ve been studying the language/intercultural learning and experiences of our outgoing semester-long and yearlong international exchange
students through a series of mixed-method studies. At CUHK, we are now sending more than a thousand students abroad each year (and also receiving a similar number of international students), so I have a lot of interesting data! In the last few years, I’ve also been looking at the experiences of our incoming international exchange students and ways to promote more meaningful interactions between local and international students.

Years ago, I noticed that many of our students who took part in study abroad programs were returning with less than enthusiastic reports about their experiences. It became apparent that many spent much of their free time with conationals and did not have an immersion experience. With the aim of devising sound, research-based interventions (e.g., intercultural communication courses, pre-sojourn orientations), I have been conducting a series of studies to better understand sojourn learning. In Asia, as in many other parts of the world there is an emphasis on increasing participation rates and an assumption that international experience will lead to significant gains in many areas (e.g., second language proficiency, intercultural competence), but this is not always the case. This realization is what drives my research. In Hong Kong, I am very fortunate as I have received generous financial support for my projects through competitive, externally-funded research grants as well as Teaching Development Grants from CUHK to develop courses that stem from my research findings.

**Here in Japan some students regard study abroad as essentially a vacation. Do you have any suggestions about how to help such students reframe their overseas ventures?**

This is also an issue that has emerged in my study abroad research, as well as the studies that have been carried out by some of my postgraduate students. Some of our students who take part in summer study abroad programs as well as our international exchange students (both incoming and outgoing) do not plan to transfer credits and this can impact their motivation and investment in sojourn learning. Since 2009, I’ve been surveying and interviewing our international exchange students and have found that many do not set specific goals and some view the period of exchange like a vacation or escape from the pressures of academic studies in Hong Kong. I have also taught and surveyed incoming international exchange students and found the same situation.

In pre-departure orientations, I think it’s really important for the facilitators to encourage realistic goal-setting (e.g., personal, social, academic, professional domains). In these sessions, it’s also essential to make it very clear that the exchange period is not a gap year. Of course, not all students treat the sojourn as a holiday. For example, some of our returnees who did not transfer credits back to CUHK viewed their stay abroad as an opportunity to take more challenging courses or courses outside their majors without worrying about grades. These highly motivated individuals could be invited to share their stories with outgoing students. In pre-sojourn sessions, their advice and encouragement may be more powerful than the words of an education abroad advisor.

**I understand you have developed a course for undergraduates with recent or current international experience called “Intercultural Transitions: Making Sense of Education Abroad.” Could you tell us a bit more about that course?**

Several years ago, I developed this credit-bearing course to enrich and extend the intercultural learning of our undergraduates with recent or current international experience (e.g., local students who have just completed an international exchange program, and incoming international exchange students). A unique feature of this elective course is that it combines local and international students. While I had offered a general introductory course in intercultural communication for many years, students may not feel that they need a course of this nature until they’re abroad. More questions about intercultural communication and second language use in informal, social contexts may arise through firsthand experience in the host environment. Returnees may come back with confusion about their identities and positioning. Interestingly, more studies are now pointing to the need for interventions that can consolidate and extend the learning of education about returnees.
At the heart of this 14-week course is the process of guided, critical reflection and the desire to propel students to higher levels of self-awareness, intercultural competence, and global citizenship. In a supportive environment, following ‘experience-to-theory-to-practice’ pedagogy, a modified version of Kolb’s (1984) experiential learning model, the students critically examine their own (and others’) international, intercultural experience in relation to theories and models of intercultural (communicative) competence, intercultural transitions, culture shock/(re)adjustment, identity reconstruction, and global citizenship. Structured reflection provides a powerful medium through which the local returnees and incoming international exchange students (from diverse disciplines and backgrounds) challenge their assumptions, pose critical questions, and connect their experiences to theoretical concepts. Through readings (e.g., sojourner accounts), discussion (face-to-face and online), and reflective writing tasks (e.g., chat forums, blogs, essays), the course participants analyze and critique their understandings of such complex notions as culture, race, ethnicity, gender, identity, language use, and power in relation to intercultural interaction. They revisit critical intercultural incidents they have experienced and move towards analyzing rather than simply judging unfamiliar cultural behavior from a single perspective. Throughout the course, they are encouraged to consider multiple views of situations as well as how their own attitudes and behavior may have impacted on how encounters unfolded. As the local and international students share experiences and ‘unpack’ their intercultural learning, they are also encouraged to set new goals for intercultural experience, whether at home or abroad.

A unique feature of the course is the mixing of local and international students who are at different stages in the study abroad cycle. In the first offering, except for one Chinese heritage student from Canada, all of the participants were local returnees and they expressed the desire to have more international students in the course to help keep their international experience alive and provide more opportunities for intercultural interactions. In the most recent offering there was a good mix of local and international students and it worked quite well as they were willing to share their views and experiences with each other. It’s a challenging approach but it can work well.

Finally, to conclude this interview, I’d like to ask about the projects you have on the horizon. Could you mention some of the projects you are engaged in now, and hope to be working on over the next five to ten years?

Last year, I was invited by the Director of General Education at CUHK to develop a fully online, credit-bearing course to support the sojourn learning of international exchange students while they are abroad, and provide the students with an opportunity to gain General Education credits while they were at the host institution. I offered Intercultural Communication and Engagement for the first time last semester. It was very exhausting, but highly rewarding! Well worth it! As a study abroad researcher, it was great as it provided me with more insight into what was happening while the students were in the host environment.

Drawing on experiential learning theory (Kolb, 1983) and the Intercultural Development Continuum (IDC) (Hammer, 2012), this interactive course is designed to help students develop a deeper understanding of intercultural communication constructs and issues, while promoting constructive intercultural/L2 interactions in the host environment (e.g., diverse social networks, meaningful intercultural experiences). As well as digesting theme-based readings, PowerPoint presentations, and YouTube links, the participants write reflective essays, exchange ideas online, and carry out fieldwork tasks, which they discuss in small groups. The weekly Discussion Board encourages them to examine their own (and others’) international/intercultural experience in relation to theories and models of cross-cultural adjustment, intercultural competence, identity reconstruction, and global citizenship. During the 14-week semester, via structured reflection, my TA (Teaching Assistant) and I prompted the students to share and reflect on their intercultural interactions and sojourn learning online. Throughout this process, they were encouraged to question their assumptions and connect their experiences to theoretical concepts as they broadened their social network.
In the first offering, there were 22 undergraduates from various Faculties who were participating in either a semester or yearlong international exchange program in one of eleven different countries. All of them were studying in a second language while abroad with English the most common medium-of-instruction. I will offer the course for the second time in the fall semester of 2015-16, and in the coming months I’ll be writing articles and book chapters related to the course and the participants (e.g., case studies). I’m currently revising the course and will hold a pre-course workshop with the next cohort in May.

Currently, I’m also the principal investigator for a large-scale project that involves four institutions of higher education in the region: CUHK in Hong Kong and Nanjing University, Fudan University, and Tsinghua University in Mainland China. In this project, we’re looking at the language and intercultural learning of students who take part in a semester-long international exchange program. At each site, we’re surveying the students before and after the sojourn and also a sampling of the participants are interviewed in-depth before and after their stay abroad (15 at each site). In addition, the interviewees respond to regular email prompts while they’re at the host institution. This rich data is providing insight into their sojourn experiences and learning. The findings are informing the revision of my intercultural communication and intercultural transition courses. My research informs my practice and vice versa.

A couple of years ago, I also started looking at the experiences of our incoming international exchange students and this has raised my awareness of the need for interventions to stimulate more meaningful interactions between local and international students. In my Intercultural Transitions course I actively encourage dialogue between students from diverse backgrounds. This time of interaction should not be limited to intercultural communication courses. I advocate interventions in both formal and informal settings on campus to help achieve the aims of internationalization. Increasing the number of international students on campus is not enough. There are steps that educators in all Faculties can take to promote better intercultural relations on campus and I’ve given several talks about this (e.g., offered suggestions about ways to promote more interactions in class no matter what the subject matter).

For Internationalization at Home (IaH) policies to be effective, we need to move beyond the notion that bringing more international students to our campuses will lead to meaningful intercultural interactions. Similarly, sending a large number of students abroad will not necessarily lead to the development of interculturally sensitive, global-minded citizens who can function appropriately and effectively in a second language in both formal and informal situations. While there have been many advances in study abroad research and practice in the past decade, there is much more work to be done. Most students who participate in study abroad programs are still sent abroad with little or no preparation, and even less attention is paid to returnees. Valuable opportunities for deep learning are then lost.

Finally, I would like to add that internationalization and study abroad are great areas to research. They encompass so many interesting and interrelated elements, e.g., language, identity, intercultural communication, socialization, and transitions, to name a few. I’ve been very fortunate to have the opportunity to put some of my research findings into practice. It’s very rewarding and there are many more aspects to explore!

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Promoting Self-Reflection for Study Abroad: 
A Report on a Pre-Sojourn Preparation Course
Gareth Humphreys (Sojo University)

Abstract

This article reports on a small-scale intervention to provide pre-study abroad (SA) training for six students at a Japanese technical university intending to take part in short English language SA programmes. The primary objective was to help prepare students for their sojourns. However, it also explores the extent that self-reflective skills might help them while abroad. Firstly, it was discovered through informal interviews with five returnee SA students from previous years that the university had not provided pre-sojourn training focusing on self-reflection. As a result, a course consisting of ten one-hour sessions that covered different cultural topics over a three-month period was set up. Data were obtained through reflective journals that the students completed in English following each session, and short semi-structured interviews conducted two months after their return from SA. While students reported that the course had helped them, specific ways in which it had done so were unclear. In addition, while there were slight developments in the quality and depth of their written reflections, linking this with improved learning while abroad was difficult.

Keywords: short-term study abroad, pre-departure SA training, learner autonomy, reflective journals

In Japan, like elsewhere, one opportunity to prepare learners to operate as multi-culturally aware individuals in cross-cultural communication is through study abroad (SA) (Risager, 2007). MEXT (2009) has made this a priority and as a result, most universities now offer a variety of SA options. At Sojo University, the setting for this research, there has been a steady rise in the number of students attending short courses overseas in recent years. Past SA research on such courses has focused mainly on changes in communicative competence, proficiency, intercultural understanding, and motivation (e.g., Cushner & Karim, 2004; Kinginger, 2009).

Since SA experiences often involve new processes of socialisation, it can be very challenging for students (Zumbihl, 2012). If these experiences of socialisation are to result in more effective learning, then it may help students to become autonomous in their capacity to filter and expand their skills and attitudes (Byram, 1997). Unfortunately, it is often the case that students find themselves abroad without the adequate learner training to help them turn their experiences more systematically into competence (Dehmel, Li & Sloane, 2011). One way to address this is by developing autonomy through self-reflections (Byram, 1997). Byram (1997) considers that for experience to lead to effective learning, students must ‘continue to reflect upon as well as develop their knowledge, skills and attitudes as a consequence of previous training’ (p.69). Therefore, helping students to develop self-reflective skills in pre-departure training may have the potential to facilitate more effective learning by helping students to apply past experience to new experience while abroad.

Method

Informants

Before the course started, I was informed that approximately thirty students were going on SA programmes. The pre-sojourn course was advertised through posters and flyers. Interested students were invited to talk to me, as the researcher and sole teacher on the course. Several students expressed an interest in the course and ten students came to the first session. However, four then dropped out. Follow-up discussions revealed that this was due to other study commitments taking priority. Six
students came regularly, four of whom went on SA-sojourns. The other two students continued to participate and their reflections were analysed, but for personal reasons they were unable to go abroad at the time and they were not interviewed later. Table 1 provides some demographic information about these six students.

Table 1. A Demographic Profile of the Six Informants in This Study

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Approx. CEFR level</th>
<th>Previous SA experience</th>
<th>Location &amp; SA duration</th>
<th>Homestay</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>Biotechnology</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>(no SA sojourn)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>Biotechnology</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Vietnam 2 weeks</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>Biotechnology</td>
<td>B1</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>U.S.A 2 weeks</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Japanese</td>
<td>Life Science</td>
<td>B1</td>
<td>2 weeks (U.S.A)</td>
<td>Germany 3 weeks</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Vietnamese/ Japanese</td>
<td>A2</td>
<td>N</td>
<td>(no SA sojourn)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Consent was obtained through an English and Japanese consent form in Appendix 1, which also specified details of the course. The students took part voluntarily, and confidentiality was assured. They were given the opportunity to ask questions and to withdraw at any stage. A further ethical consideration regarded the reflective journals, since these needed to be handled sensitively as private documents. Therefore, the level of access shared was agreed individually at the start of the course.

The course

Content for the 10-session pre-departure course was selected to allow for the exploration of cultural differences and misunderstandings. It was hoped that the material and discussions would encourage reflection both of the target cultural perspective and what is regarded as normal from the student viewpoint. In addition, the content attempted to make clear that on SA programmes, interactions with other cultures do take place, and that there is the potential for learning and growth, as well as for cultural misunderstanding. Table 2 shows the topics that were discussed in each session:

Table 2. Topics Covered in a Ten-Session SA Pre-Departure Course

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Topics Covered in a Ten-Session SA Pre-Departure Course</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Greetings and course objectives</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Japanese cultural identity and stereotypes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Cross-cultural manners and politeness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Family roles and gender across cultures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Social life and free time activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Body language, gestures, and ritual behaviours</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Beliefs, values, and cross-cultural taboos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Handling culture shock and unmet expectations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Advice to people from other countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Multiculturalism and diversity in different societies</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Since it may have been difficult for the students to directly enter discussions about complex cultural issues in a second language, the sessions were organised with simple tasks at the start before moving on to more open-ended learning that attempted to challenge cultural assumptions. While at times the students supported each other with Japanese translations or explanations, the discussions were conducted almost entirely in English. They were aware that this was necessary, given institutional preferences and my low level of Japanese, from the outset.

Each session followed the same format:

1. The teacher told an anecdote to set the context for the session and to generate interest. The anecdotes were either personal or were found through online research on the topic area.
2. Next, the students received a short text of approximately fifty words relating the session topic. These included problems to solve, cultural misunderstandings, and critical incidents. The students had a short time to reformulate the texts in their own words and share these with the group. This was followed by a brief discussion of the content raised in the reformulations.
3. Next, the teacher provided an exercise for students to complete in pairs from texts such as Abe, Nebashi, Sasaki, and Shaules (1998) or Corbett (2010).
4. The final 15-20 minutes of each session involved teacher facilitated discussion of the session’s central themes.

There was no homework for this course and it was a non-credit, ungraded program. The main incentives for the students to participate were to practise English communication skills while discussing topics that they found interesting and relevant. This interest in the topics was evident from their engagement with the discussions and from informal feedback which they regularly provided.

**Instruments**

Firstly, I conducted informal interviews with five returnee SA students to learn about the extent that pre-sojourn training at the university had been provided in previous years. I also wanted to learn if they perceived a new course in which self-reflective skills would be developed in the discussion of different cultural topics as useful and relevant.

During the course, reflective journals were utilised as a research tool as it was hoped they would lead to developments in self-reflection. The journals allowed the opportunity to practice self-reflective skills by looking at course content and considering ways of managing intercultural communication problems that they may encounter overseas. The journals were completed in English. They contained questions to encourage deeper reflection (see Appendix 2 for an example). Following each submission, I left comments and additional questions to promote more thought. Finally, language mistakes were corrected on each entry, since the students reported a preference for this at the start of the course.

In addition to the journals, post-sojourn interviews were arranged with the four students who had gone abroad approximately two months following their return. Interviews would have been held sooner had scheduling permitted. The interviews were semi-structured using a list of starter questions (see Appendix 3) to generate discussion. It was hoped that this approach would allow for the expression of individual opinions. The interviews were conducted in English in a private study space at the university. They were not transcribed but notes were taken throughout. Each interview lasted approximately fifteen minutes. It was necessary to conduct the interviews in English since, as stated, my level of Japanese ability was not at the required standard to facilitate or understand the interviews. In addition, since the students went to contexts where they would use English, the interviews provided an opportunity for communicative practice.
Procedures

The research process took approximately eleven months from establishing a need for such a course through the informal interviews with students who had been on SA sojourns in previous years, to the post-SA interviews with the participating SA students. The reflective journals were analysed continuously during the ten-session course. The interview notes were written up immediately following each interview and analysed. Since the research was largely investigative and exploratory, to see if training in self-reflections could lead to more effective learning while abroad, an interpretive approach enabling theories to emerge from the data was utilised. Grounded theory methods provided systematic and flexible guidelines to interpret the meanings and views expressed by the participants (Charmaz, 2006). Analysis of both the reflections and the interviews utilised open coding in which I attempted to identify and categorise examples of meaningful reflective thought connected to the course content or SA experience. This enabled the codes used to emerge from the data in analysis.

Table 3 provides a timeline for this research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Jan. 2014</td>
<td>Informal interviews with five SA students from previous years to ascertain the existing pre-sojourn training offered at the university. This enabled me to recognise the need to set up a new course.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mar. - Apr. 2014</td>
<td>The course was advertised and students contacted me to express an interest in the course. Ethical considerations were managed at this stage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May-Jul. 2014</td>
<td>The 10-session course took place. Continuous analysis of the reflective journals</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July/Aug. 2014</td>
<td>4 of the 6 students went on overseas sojourns during the summer.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nov. 2014</td>
<td>Post-sojourn semi-structured interviews were carried out.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Results

Interviews with previous SA students

The previous SA students I approached at the university reported that no such training had been provided before their sojourns and that it could have been helpful in preparing them. There was enthusiasm for establishing the course and all expressed an interest in taking part since they were planning to go on further SA experiences in the future. Because of study commitments, only two of these were able to participate (S3 and S4).

Reflective journals

While the main aim of the journals was to enable learners to reflect on the course discussions, I also wanted to use these to see if developments in the reflections took place. It was clear from the first week that more scaffolding was required and so I provided extensive feedback on early reflective submissions. I therefore adapted the journals slightly to include more prompting questions to encourage more meaningful reflections. Although students appeared to enjoy the course, some reluctance to complete the reflections was reported among the students during the course due to homework pressure from their main study areas.

In the early stages of the course, the journals showed a high level of enthusiasm and motivation for intercultural experiences among the students, demonstrated by S3 who stated ‘I want to learn about characteristics of many countries’ and S1 who said ‘I want to be an international person’. However, there was also a feeling of apprehension from some students about SA. S6 said, ‘I have little experience talking with people from other countries’ and S1 reported that she was ‘nervous to meet new people’.
As the course progressed, there was slight indication of changes in attitude of these students in journal statements such as the following from S1, ‘I will be able to make friends with people I meet abroad’, and from S4, ‘If I make an effort to understand people, it will be good’. S3, in a very clearly stated observation, said, ‘Gaps of culture exist naturally. We need to accept this fact and try to respect each other’.

Towards the end of the course, there were indications that some developments in the reflections had taken place. This was seen in an increase in length of the writing and in a shift from mainly superficial comments (e.g., S1: ‘We learned about body language’; S6: ‘There are many kinds of greetings’) to writing with more substantial reflections (e.g., S1: ‘Studying culture before going to a foreign country is very important to understand more people’). The teacher-supported practice (i.e., the inclusion of more prompting questions and feedback on submitted reflection) may have contributed to developments in the detail contained within the self-reflections.

**Post-SA interviews**

Approximately two months after returning from their sojourns, short semi-structured interviews were arranged with S2, S3, S4, and S5 in English. Each interview lasted approximately 15 minutes. S1 and S6 did not take part in these interviews since they had not gone on a sojourn. Interview questions attempted to build on the categories that emerged from analysis of the reflections. These included: enthusiasm for SA; SA anxiety; growing confidence about SA; awareness of cultural differences; awareness of cultural similarities; examples of meaningful self-reflection.

Each student reported having a very positive experience in their respective SA destinations. There was also positive feedback about the pre-sojourn course with each student reporting that it had been useful. However, it was difficult to identify specific areas in which the attempts to develop self-reflections had helped them. In interview topics on cultural misunderstandings, and similarities and differences between Japan and the destination countries, each student keenly engaged in discussion. However, reflections were more limited in questions about critical incidents and learning while abroad. There were no references in the interviews to any pre-sojourn course content. As a result, developing any theory among these students about connections between training for greater self-reflection and more effective learning while abroad were not possible. However, it was very useful that the students were positive about the pre-SA course, and this will help support the course running again in future years at this institution.

**Conclusion**

With indications that there will be a rise in SA participation throughout Japan (Tanikawa, 2013), preparation courses are increasingly relevant. The inclusion of some training in self-reflective skills, and providing students with opportunities to consider different cultural perspectives alongside their own may be particularly effective. If SA students in the coming years are to benefit more comprehensively from experiences overseas, then it is not enough to send them abroad and expect them to develop skills for successful communication with people from diverse cultural backgrounds and deepen understanding of foreign countries and cultures without providing some form of SA preparation.

However, it would be difficult to use this research to justify the inclusion of more learner autonomy training for pre-SA students at this institution since the research did not lead to sufficiently detailed results for theory construction. Further research in the area needs to be conducted to find clearer links. It was unfortunate that it was not practical to ask the students to continue writing reflections while abroad since this may have provided some useful and interesting data. However, the journals were also somewhat limited due to the linguistic challenges they presented to some students who at times struggled to write in depth reflections in English.
In order to find out more about the connections between self-reflective training as an aspect of learner autonomy development and improved learning while abroad, it would be interesting to conduct a more extensive case study of a small group of pre-SA students and to follow development longitudinally over a greater period of time. Since my area of focus in postgraduate study is the extent that approaches to learner autonomy can enable the acquisition of intercultural communicative competence (Byram, 1997), this is an avenue I intend to investigate further. Using such students in qualitative case study research could be extremely interesting and useful.

References


Appendix 1: Student informed consent and course rationale

Consent Form 同意書

I understand I can withdraw from this study at any time without giving any reason.
私は理由が無くても、いつでもこの学習をやめることができると理解しています。

I understand that I am free to ask any questions at any time.
私は自由にいつでも、どんな質問でも尋ねることができると理解しています。

I understand that the information I provide will be shared with the researcher and may be used in subsequent publications.
私が提出した情報をガレス先生によって共有され、将来的に研究出版に使われることがあると理解しています。

I understand that the information provided by me will be held confidentially, such that only the researcher can trace this information back to me individually.
私が提出した情報は秘密が守られ、ガレス先生だけがこの情報をたどることができると理解しています。

I, __________________________________(NAME) consent to participate in the study conducted by Gareth Humphreys, Sojo International Learning Center, Sojo University.
私_________________________________(名前)は、ガレス先生によって行われる崇城大学 SICL での研究に参加を同意致します。

Signed (Gareth Humphreys): 署名（ギャレス・ハンフリーズ）
Signed (Participant): 署名（参加者）
Date: (日付)

Course Objectives
1. To identify ways that culture and language, and communication are linked
2. To develop an understanding of when and why communicative misunderstandings occur and how to overcome them
3. To appreciate the variety of communicative differences around the world and recognize that interacting with people from different backgrounds brings opportunities not only for misunderstandings, but also for growth

目的
1. 文化・言語・会話がどのように関連しているのかを発見します。
2. どんな時、どうして会話に誤解が生じるのか、そしてそれを克服する方法について理解を深めます。
3. 世界の様々なコミュニケーションの方法を知り、異なる背景を持つ人との交流が誤解だけでなく自身の成長の機会になることを認識します。

What will we discuss?
The content will be about differences among people from different cultures and different cultural ‘rules’, customs and behaviour. The topics will not only be about avoiding cultural mistakes but it will also involve reflection on your own culture, and on what you consider normal from your own cultural point of view.

何を話し合うの？
内容は異文化の人々と彼等の文化的規則、習慣や言動について話し合います。トピックは文化的な間違いを避けるためのものだけでなく、自分自身の文化について、また自身の文化的見解から普通とは何か考察します。それにより自身の文化で普通なことと異文化で普通であることを関連して考えることができるようになります。
Appendix 2: Sample questions for the student reflective journals

Describe what you did in class this week.

What did you find most interesting?

What did you find challenging?

Rate your performance in class this week:
☐ Poor  ☐ Satisfactory  ☐ Good  ☐ Very good

Why did you give yourself this rating?

What would you like to do differently next week?

Think about your study abroad country. How do you think this week’s topic will help you when you are away?

Appendix 3: Starter questions asked in the post-sojourn student interviews

- What did you enjoy/not enjoy when you were abroad?
- What did you think was different in your study-abroad country? How did that make you feel?
- What did you think was similar in your study-abroad country? How did that make you feel?
- Did you experience any cultural misunderstandings? If so, can you describe them? (What happened? Where did it happen? How did you react?)
- In what ways do you think your study abroad experience has helped you?
- What would you do differently when abroad next time?
- Was the pre-study abroad course helpful? If so, in what ways?
Scaffolding the Meta-language of Study Abroad

Tim Newfields (Toyo University)

Culture shock is a frequent experience of many students venturing overseas, yet all too often study abroad pre-departure programs do not prepare participants to deal with the range of different emotions they are likely to encounter while living in a foreign culture for an extended period of time. This activity describes one way of scaffolding some concepts about cross-cultural adjustment that are common among overseas sojourners. From the onset, let me make it clear that the model presented in this activity – which is based on ideas by Lysgaard (1955) and Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1962) – is nothing but a "useful myth" that might explain some aspects of many sojourners' experiences overseas. It should also be noted that competing models, such as those of Lesser and Peter (1957, cited in Li p.71), Bennett (1993), Kim (2001), and Bridges (2009), exist. Personally, I contend that all universalist models of cross-cultural change are problematic if examined closely. The range of experiences that can occur during study abroad are too complex and multi-dimensional to fit neatly into a single model. However, this does not imply that models are not without value. To the contrary, they are an expedient - perhaps even necessary - way of organizing concepts and interpreting outcomes. The crucial caveat to remember is that the theories presented here are merely convenient simplifications.

Target Audience and Time Frame

This activity is designed for Japanese students with CEFR B1 - B2 English proficiency levels who are planning to study abroad in the near future. It can be done in a single session or over several sessions. The activity was designed for participants who are fluent in Japanese. However, it could be adapted for those with mixed linguistic backgrounds by only using English. In such cases, additional time may be needed to cover all of the material adequately. Please note that the activities in Handouts 3 and 4 could be assigned as homework if this material is covered over multiple sessions.

Materials Needed

Four handouts are used in this activity:

- **Handout 1** is a vocabulary sheet designed to cover some core vocabulary pertaining to study abroad. It provides some lexical items that may be useful when describing overseas experiences in English. Many Japanese lack a meta-linguistic framework to describe their overseas experiences in English and Handout A covers a good deal of socio-cultural jargon to fill that gap. Each participant should receive one copy of this handout, which is in Appendix A.

- **Handout 2** is an information gap activity based on a mini-lecture about cross-cultural adjustment. Half of the participants should receive the Student A Handout and the other half the Student B Handout. Since each version contains different blank spaces, the presenter should have both versions.

  Few students in Japan are accustomed to listening to lectures in English. This short lecture describes the cross-cultural adjustments of the author in Japan over the last thirty years within the framework of Lysgaard’s (1955) U-Turn Hypothesis. Chances are you will want to revise the material to describe your own overseas sojourner experiences. If you prefer, you could also present those experiences in terms of a different theoretical framework. This handout, which appears in Appendix B, represents but one of many possible ways of describing cross-cultural experiences. No claims are made that it will apply to all long-term foreign residents. Instead, I
prefer to frame the material in terms of probabilities: certain experiences become increasing likely over long periods of time. To keep it relevant, mention how Japanese venturing overseas often go through some similar experiences as foreigners coming to Japan.

**Handout 3** is an *interpretative exercise* consisting of sixteen statements made by various visitors to Japan at different points after their arrival. The task is to interpret each statement in light of the theoretical framework that was presented in the mini-lecture. If you wish, you can broaden this task to consider how gender, race, and nationality might impact the likelihood of any given statement being made. Not all of the statements have clear "answers"; some of the statements could be made by people at various stages of cross-cultural adjustment. This underscores how data does not necessarily fit neatly into theoretical models.

What I prefer to do when guiding this activity is to suggest that novice sojourners and long-term residents are *likely* to make different statements. I mention that these statements were selected to generate discussion, not issue edicts. Each participant should receive one copy of this handout, which can be found in Appendix C.

**Handout 4** consists of some *cross-cultural discussion questions* utilizing the vocabulary mentioned in Handout 1. The first part of this handout consists of eight opinion statements about Japan vis-à-vis other nations. The task is to agree or disagree with each statement, then offer support for chosen stances. Many Japanese EFL students have difficulty providing convincing rhetorical support for their opinions. For this reason, one goal of this activity is to practice supporting viewpoints.

The second part of this handout consists of twelve open-ended questions about cross-cultural issues. If your audience is primarily non-Japanese, you will surely want to change many of these questions. Each participant should receive one copy of Handout 4, which can be found in Appendix D.

**Procedure**

The following six steps is one way of doing through this activity:

- First, go over the vocabulary items in Handout 1, matching the eighteen target vocabulary items with approximate English definitions and (if you wish) cognates in the participants' native language. Depending on the class level and size, this can take anywhere from ten to twenty minutes.

- Next, mention how some scholars believe that people living overseas tend to go through stages of cross-cultural adjustment. Introduce one model for classifying sojourner experiences, and mention that it is not without critics. For example, the model I introduced has been criticized by scholars such as Church (1982), Furnham and Bochner (1986), Ward, Okura, Kennedy, and Kojima (1998), as well as Berardo (2007). However, the purpose of this activity is not to critique any model in depth: it is simply to learn some core vocabulary and one way of interpreting study abroad experiences that may be historically interesting.

  After distributing one version of Handout 2 to half of the class and the other version to the other half, give a short talk about your own experiences in a foreign culture. The lecture should be under ten minutes long. I prefer to present the information twice – once at natural speed without pauses to allow listeners to focus on global comprehension, then again with pauses to enable them to pick out details. If you want to shift the focus to solely on developing macro-listening skills, Handout 2 could be revised. Handout 2 is in an information gap activity format, so Students A and B can easily corroborate each other's comprehension. After giving the lecture twice, allow time for confirmatory questions and inquiries from participants before moving onto the next phase of this activity.
• The next challenge is to see whether or not listeners can apply the theoretical model in Handout 2 to diverse statements made by foreign residents in Japan, which appears in Handout 3. Belief in the model itself is not essential. In terms of Bloom's Taxonomy of Learning Objectives (1956), the goal now is to ascertain whether the previously discussed theory can be applied to some actual experiences.

If working with a class of roughly thirty participants, I prefer to have one pair interpret just one of the sixteen statements on Handout 3 each, then share their views with the class as a whole as a sample response. Please note that it is not essential to cover all of the statements - the general pattern becomes soon evident: novice sojourners appear to be more apt to make ethnocentric statements, while long-term sojourners may be more likely to make ethnorelative ones (Bennett, 1986, 2004). Depending on the class level and size, this phase likely takes 20-35 minutes.

• The next task is to have participants discuss the eight opinion statements on Handout 4 in pairs or small groups. Ideally, they should share their views with the entire class. As an affordance, I modeled two possible ways to responding of the first statement, then had participants discuss the remaining seven statements in groups of 3 or 4 for about ten minutes. Finally, I asked representatives of each small group to present their arguments for or against a given statement to the entire class. To be candid, many of the students had difficulty doing this; it seems effective rhetorical delivery is a long-term goal that cannot be learned in one or two lessons.

• The second part of Handout 4 can be covered in various ways. If 15 to 20 minutes is available, participants can discuss the questions in pairs or small groups, then share their views with the class as a whole. If there is not sufficient time, one option would be to have students choose 3 or 4 questions that look interesting and email their responses to each other.

• Although I did not solicit any systematic feedback about this activity, many teachers may want to do so. Appendix E lists a possible feedback form that could be completed at the end of the session. When I did this activity in 2014, a general feedback form was distributed at the end of the three-day program. Unfortunately, I did not receive detailed feedback about this activity other than it was "highly rated" by the participants.

Limitations

This article has mentioned one way of helping Japanese students who are planning to study abroad to describe and interpret some possible overseas experiences in English. It has also touched upon issues concerning internationalization within Japan. Although the model used in this activity is of questionable validity, it is not necessarily without merit. The model by Lysgaard (1955) and Gullahorn & Gullahorn (1962) does provide some useful meta-language and its concepts can be scaffolded to help those venturing to other countries narrate some of their experiences in a target language. Personally, I prefer to think of this activity as a sort of "folklore lesson" - the framework presented is appealing in its simplicity and it may have some useful vocabulary, but the model itself is inadequate in many ways.

Realistically speaking, I question the value of any single lesson pre-departure activity. As Csordas (1999) and Montrose (2012) point out, living in a foreign culture involves a lot of experiential and embodied learning - not just intellectual realizations. For that reason, I believe that simulations such as Ecotones (Hofner-Saphiere, 1989), NaZa NaZa (Newfields, 2001), or Barnga (Thiagarajan, 2006) should be part of an effective pre-departure training program, in addition to cognitive details about culture and language. Moreover, pre-departure training programs, in my view, need to be at least one semester in length and include a semester-length post-return orientation. Needless to say, economic constraints have shrunk the pre-departure and post-return programs at many institutions. As a consequence, the range of interactions that study abroad participants engage in while overseas is often limited. There is also a tendency to "shoebox" those experiences (La Brack, 2012 cited in Scharbert, 2015, p. 33) upon returning home. Post-return programs should foster ways of incorporating them into an evolving sense of self - or perhaps we
should even be bold enough to use the term "selves." Switching languages does not merely involve changing words; it also involves enacting different culturally-mediated roles and joining wider discourse-streams. In this sense, code-switching can be regarded as a sort of socially-embedded identity performance.

**Further Reading**


### Appendix A

#### Handout 1: VOCABULARY PRE-LISTENING EXERCISE

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Match the words on the left (1-18) with the descriptions in the center (a-r) and the Japanese on the right (ア～ツ). The first two terms are already done.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WORD</th>
<th>APPROXIMATE MEANING</th>
<th>RELATED JAPANESE TERM</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) adjustment [n]</td>
<td>(a) a fight, battle, or unfriendly encounter</td>
<td>(ア) 印象、感じ、心証</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) adaptation [n]</td>
<td>(b) after returning, following a return back home</td>
<td>(イ) 適応、順応</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) bewildered [adj]</td>
<td>(c) become unable to change, become rigid [opposite: become more flexible]</td>
<td>(ウ) 帰った後</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) bother [v, n]</td>
<td>(d) before going to a destination [opposite: post-return]</td>
<td>(エ) 化石化する</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) confrontation [n]</td>
<td>(e) communicate or be directly involved in</td>
<td>(オ) 調整な、調節、整合</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) (be) displace(d) [v, adj]</td>
<td>(f) feel confused, uncertain, or unsure of</td>
<td>(カ) 軽薄な、浅い、表面的な</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) fossilize (-ing) [v]</td>
<td>(g) annoyance, unmet expectation, dissatisfaction</td>
<td>(キ) 軌道、軌跡</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) frustration [n]</td>
<td>(h) gut feeling, perception, sense, opinion</td>
<td>(ク) 欲求不満</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9) hostility [n]</td>
<td>(i) made simpler or easier, streamlined</td>
<td>(コ) 出発前</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10) impression(s) [n]</td>
<td>(j) feel out of place or unsettled [opposite: feel at home]</td>
<td>(サ) 対立、対決</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11) interact [v]</td>
<td>(k) be in the majority, [opposite: be in a minority]</td>
<td>(シ) 当惑する、五里霧中で</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(12) post-return [adj]</td>
<td>(l) path, course, route, direction</td>
<td>(ス) 単純化された</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(13) pre-departure [adj]</td>
<td>(m) step, phase, period</td>
<td>(セ) 敵意、敵対、反目</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(14) predominate [adj, v]</td>
<td>(n) surface, shallow, sketchy [opposite: deep]</td>
<td>(ソ) 頑わす、乱す</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(15) simplified [adj]</td>
<td>(o) the process of getting used to a new situation</td>
<td>(タ) [人が]場違い や身の置き所がない</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(16) stage [n, v]</td>
<td>(p) the process of becoming better suited to an environment</td>
<td>(チ) 段階</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(17) superficial [adj]</td>
<td>(q) annoyance, dissatisfaction, unmet expectation(s)</td>
<td>(ツ) 優位を占める</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(18) trajectory [n]</td>
<td>(r) unfriendliness, ill feeling [opposite: amity]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Appendix B

**Handout 2: LISTENING EXERCISE (Student A)**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** As you listen to the mini-lecture, fill in the blank information. After that, consult with your partner(s) to complete the details.

**Common Stages of Cross-Cultural Adaptation**

[Based on a model by Lysgaard, (1955) and by Gullahorn & Gullahorn, (1962)]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>When (for Tim)</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Advice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pre-Departure</td>
<td>Before leaving home</td>
<td>Sets a trajectory for many experiences that follow.</td>
<td>Learn about the __________ of the country you plan to visit, interacting with others from there before departure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 1:</td>
<td>First ____ months after arriving in the host country</td>
<td>Everything seems new &amp; exciting. Superficial touristic impressions predominate.</td>
<td>Remember - __________ are often not accurate, so it is important to avoid making __________. Seek to go beyond the surface and consider why things are so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honeymoon</td>
<td>7-36 months in Japan</td>
<td>Frustration &amp; __________ become common. Barriers become clearer &amp; hostility sometimes is felt.</td>
<td>Try to understand why things ____ you. Relax &amp; develop a good sense of humor. Also, make regular efforts to strengthen your foreign language skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 2:</td>
<td>_____ years in the host country</td>
<td>Frustration lessens as humor grows. ______ gradually increases.</td>
<td>Continue exploring new things and remember your knowledge is still very _______. Avoid fossilizing &amp; hanging out only with others from your own country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confrontation</td>
<td>After 9 years in Japan</td>
<td>You are &quot;__________&quot; more &amp; the target culture no longer seems so &quot;foreign.&quot;</td>
<td>Remember some people will position you as a &quot;__________&quot; no matter how long you've been overseas. Also, notice how many sub-cultures coexist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 3:</td>
<td>Future?</td>
<td>Reverse culture shock occurs when returning home. Feelings of being _________ &amp; bewildered are apt to happen.</td>
<td>Remember that identity may change as we grow older and nationality and identification cannot fully define who we are.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjustment</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stage 4:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-Entry</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CAUTION:** To some extent, this model is a ________ **myth** – it may not **apply** to all persons. Also, the length time at each stage can ____ widely.
**Common Stages of Cross-Cultural Adaptation**

[Based on a model by Lysgaard, (1955) and by Gullahorn & Gullahorn, (1962)]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stage</th>
<th>When (for Tim)</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Advice</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-Departure</strong></td>
<td>Before leaving home</td>
<td>Sets a trajectory for many experiences that follow.</td>
<td>Learn about the language and culture of the country you plan to visit, with others from there before departure.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 1: Honeymoon</strong></td>
<td>First 6 months after arriving in the host country</td>
<td>Everything seems _________. Superficial touristic impressions _________.</td>
<td>Remember - first impressions are often not accurate, so it is important to avoid making quick judgments. Seek to go beyond the surface and consider things are so.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 2: Adjustment</strong></td>
<td>7-36 months in Japan</td>
<td>Frustration &amp; shock become common. Barriers become ________ &amp; hostility sometimes is felt.</td>
<td>Try to understand why things bother you. Relax &amp; develop a good ________. Also, make regular efforts to strengthen your foreign language skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 3: Adjustment</strong></td>
<td>3-8 years in the host country</td>
<td>Frustration lessens as ________ grows. Comfort gradually increases.</td>
<td>Continue ________ new things and remember your knowledge is still very incomplete. Avoid ________ &amp; hanging out only with others from your own country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 4: Adaptation</strong></td>
<td>After ___ years in Japan</td>
<td>You are &quot;going native&quot; more &amp; the target culture no longer seems so &quot;__________.&quot;</td>
<td>Remember some people will position you as a &quot;new foreigner&quot; no matter how long you've been overseas. Also, notice how many ________ coexist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Stage 5: Re-Entry</strong></td>
<td>Future?</td>
<td>Reverse culture shock occurs when returning home. Feelings of being displaced &amp; ________ are apt to happen.</td>
<td>Remember that identity may change as we grow older and ________ and linguistic identification cannot fully define who we are.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**CAUTION:** To some extent, this model is a simplified ________ – it may not ________ to all persons. Also, the length time at each stage can vary widely.
**Appendix C**

**Handout 3: INTERPRETATIVE EXERCISE**

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Working in small groups, match the statements below that are often made by non-Japanese in Japan. Which of the five stages of cross-cultural adjustment mentioned earlier does each statement seem to reflect? When you read each statement, what sort of images come to mind?

Some Common Statements about Japan by Non-Japanese

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SAMPLE STATEMENT</th>
<th>STAGE?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) &quot;At this point I know more about Japan than many Japanese. At times I teach</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese about their own history.&quot;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) “I can’t really tell the difference between Japanese and Chinese or Koreans -</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they all seem the same.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) “Japanese are the kindest people in the world! They are so polite and well-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>mannered!”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) “Why don’t Japanese people say what they are thinking? I can’t understand why</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>they don’t express their true feelings.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) “I feel as if I can’t understand my native land anymore. I haven’t been there</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for ages and have little desire to return.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) “I feel most stereotypes about Japan are merely myths - so many exceptions ex</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ist and Japan is not a mono-culture.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) “Shinto seems ‘ecological’ and earth-friendly - it has a deep respect for na</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ture and the environment.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) “Now questions such as ’Can you use chopsticks?’ or ’Do you like Japan?’ are</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>starting to really bother me.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9) “Japanese women are wonderful! The men are often dull, but women come strai</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ght from heaven!”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10) “I used to make friends with Japanese just to practice the language; now</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that seems dumb - something deeper is needed for any meaningful friendship.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(11) “Recently I’m unsure whether to act Japanese or foreign. I notice some Japan</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ese want to position me as a ‘dumb foreigner’ because of my skin color.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(12) “Most of the time I feel comfortable in Japan, even though this country is</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>strange in many ways.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(13) “Most Japanese men are so boring when sober: you’ve got to get them drunk!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>If they start drinking and loosening up, they become much, much more interesting!</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(14) “When I go to public baths in Japan, I sometimes remind Japanese of proper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sento etiquette. It’s ironic!”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(15) “Topics such as whaling are difficult to discuss with my Japanese friends.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I avoid such topics.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(16) “I’ve given up trying to ‘become Japanese’. It is more important to relax</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and be who I am.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix D

Handout 4: DISCUSSION ACTIVITIES

Cross Cultural Discussion Topics

PART ONE - Working in pairs or small groups, agree or disagree with the following statements. (Be sure to mention at least one reason why you agree/disagree.)

1. Japan is unique and very distinct (different) from any other country in Asia.
2. Japanese tend to be more “shy” than people from other countries.
3. Friendships between Japanese and foreigners tend to be superficial (not deep; shallow).
4. Most Japanese tend to have a simplified view of foreign countries.
5. Most Japanese usually feel out of place (like they don’t fit in) when surrounded by foreigners.
6. Today there is not much difference between Japan and the West because Japan is very westernized.
7. Japanese are worse at learning foreign languages than people from other nations.
8. To understand another culture deeply, you must have deep friendships with people from that culture.

PART TWO: Discuss the questions below with your partner(s).

1. What are some things that help people who travel abroad adjust to (adapt to) life overseas? (Try to think of at least 2-3 behaviors.)
2. What do you think often hinders (prevents) people overseas from adjusting to foreign cultures? (Mention at least 2-3 things.)
3. How long does it take most foreigners to adapt to (get accustomed to) life in Japan?
4. Have you felt bewildered (confused, surprised) by any foreign customs?
5. Are there any aspects of Japanese culture that bother (irritate, annoy) you?
6. Can you think of any Japanese cultural norms (standards) have been displaced (taken over) by Western cultural norms?
7. Have you sometimes felt frustration (mild anger) when talking with foreigners? If so, why?
8. Why does it seem that Japanese and Chinese and Koreans often tend to feel hostility (unfriendliness) towards each other?
9. What is your overall impression (feeling about) of foreigners in Japan?
10. Has that impression changed in any ways recently?
11. Do you find it difficult to interact (communicate) in English? If so, why?
12. What topics do you avoid (not talk about) when speaking with foreigners?

SUGGESTED ANSWERS FOR HANDOUT 1: (1)-(o) - (イ) / (2)-(p) - (オ) / (3)-(f) - (エ) / (4)-(q) - (ソ) / (5)-(a) - (サ) / (6)-(j) - (タ) / (7)-(c) - (エ) / (8)-(g) - (チ) / (9)-(r) - (セ) / (10)-(h) - (ア) / (11)-(e) - (ケ) / (12)-(b) - (ウ) / (13)-(d) - (コ) / (14)-(k) - (ツ) / (15)-(i) - (ス) / (16)-(m) - (チ) / (17)-(n) - (カ) / (18)-(l) - (キ)

SUGGESTED ANSWERS FOR HANDOUT 2: (A) 4,5 / (B) 0,1 / (C) 1 (D) 2 / (E) 2 / (F) 5 / (G) 4,5 / (H) 1 / (I) 5 / (J) 2 / (K) 1 / (L) 3 / (M) 3-5 / (N) 3-5 / (O) 3 / (P) 2 / (Q) 4 / (R) 3-5 / (S) 3-5

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Informed Consent Statement: The purpose of this feedback survey is twofold: (1) to ascertain how helpful today’s activity seemed, and (2) to make decisions about how to change this activity when it is used next year. Completion is voluntary and you may skip any questions that you prefer not to answer. This survey takes about 5 minutes to complete and can be done in class. All information is confidential and will be used solely for the purposes mentioned above. If you have any questions about this survey, you are welcome to contact me at any time.

- Timothy Newfields (Toyo Univ. Fac. of Economics, 5-28-20 Hakusen, Bunkyo-ku, Tokyo 112-8606, email: timothy@toyo.jp)

Appendix E
BILINGUAL FEEDBACK FORM

1. How clear was the goal of this activity? (check one)
   □ very clear  □ somewhat clear  □ not so clear  □ very unclear

2. How clear were the instructions for the various activities in class? (check one)
   □ very clear  □ somewhat clear  □ not so clear  □ very unclear

3. How was the pace of this class (check one)
   □ too fast  □ just right  □ too slow

4. How easy was the teacher’s English? (check one)
   □ very easy  □ just right  □ a bit difficult  □ much too difficult

5. What was the most useful part of today’s class? (check one)
   □ Handout 1 (Vocabulary Sheet)  □ Handout 3 (Interpretative Exercise)
   □ Handout 2 (Information Gap Activity)  □ Handout 4, Part 1 (Opinion Statements)
   □ Handout 4, Part 2 (Open-Ended Questions)

6. What was the most important point you learned today?
   (自由に記入して下さい)

7. Was there anything you wanted to learn that wasn’t covered today?
   (自由に記入して下さい)

ご協力ありがとうございました。

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