



## A Social Narrative Inquiry of Three Japanese University Participants In a Short-term Study Abroad Program

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### Abstract

This study investigates the impact of a newly introduced study abroad program at a private Japanese university. It examines the linguistic, cultural, and personal experiences of three Japanese university students who studied in English for four weeks. After interviewing the participants at least once individually and once in a group, two main findings emerged. First, the students expressed a desire to experience foreign culture firsthand, but their experience appears to have had limited effects on their language learning motivation upon their return to Japan. Second, although the short-term impact of the study abroad experience left favorable impressions on the learners, specific details concerning tangible effects were unclear. Further investigation into the long-term effect of the study abroad program is necessary to help university administrators develop the program further.

**Keywords:** Study abroad, narrative case study, cultural knowledge, linguistic development, personal growth

Dewey (1938), Lewin (1957), and Kolb (1984), have argued adults learn best by experiencing situations firsthand. Kolb (1984) developed the four-stage model of experiential learning shown in Figure 1. The first stage begins with a concrete, active experience. Learning is said to take place because of active involvement in the task rather than by simply watching or reading. The second stage is *reflective observation*. After learners participate in the task, they must take time to reflect on the experience. Learners explain the task to themselves by comparing it with previous experiences or by analyzing it within the context of the situation. The third stage, *abstract conceptualization*, is where learners analyze the experience to put it into a conceptual form and generalize from the experience. In essence this is a metacognitive activity in which people think about how they learn. In the final stage, *active experimentation*, learners take a conceptual form and apply it to a new situation. This involves applying problem solving skills and concepts from the previous experience to the new situation.

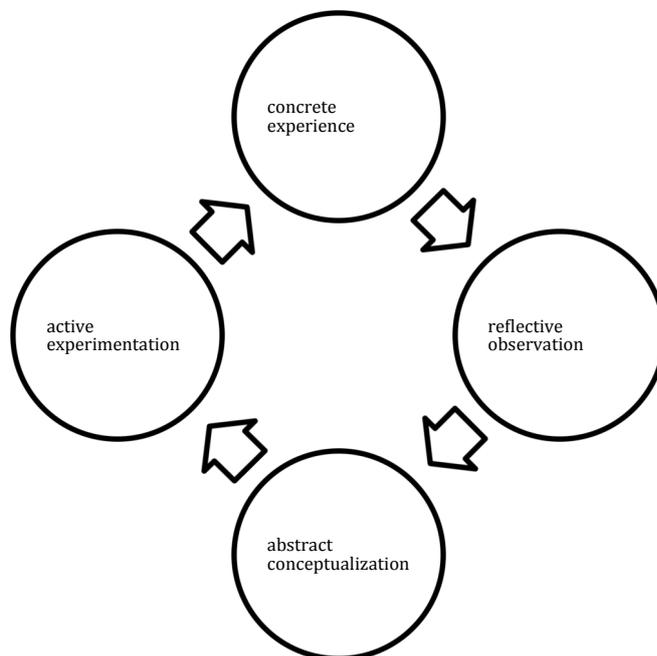


Figure 1. Kolb's Process of Experiential Learning (1984)



Kolb's theory, however, has limitations. Rodgers (1996) pointed out that learning includes other factors, such as motivation, goals, or choice. In addition, Seaman (2007) argued that Kolb's model lacks a social dimension. He suggested that the meaning derived from an experience is not an individual event, but rather a collaborative process in which individuals reflect upon a contextual experience within a given environment.

### **Imagined Communities**

Norton (2001) expanded upon the term *imagined communities*, first introduced by Anderson (1991), when discussing the role of learner identity in foreign language learning. According to Norton, "different learners have different imagined communities, and these imagined communities are best understood in the context of a learner's unique investment in the target language and the conditions under which he or she speaks and practices it" (p. 165). She highlighted how a foreign language learner might be individually motivated, but that social contextual conditions affect motivation because learners are intertwined in a social milieu. Norton was critical of the artificial divide between the individual and the social world and hypothesized that a learner's commitment to a L2 was also an investment in his or her own identity. Thus, the social environment in which individuals study an L2 directly impacts their identities and motivation levels.

The concept of imagined communities has many proponents. Researchers such as Kanno and Norton (2003), Lave and Wenger (1991), Pavlenko and Norton (2005), and Wenger (1998) have argued that an imagined community can be both spatial and temporal. One's imagination is the mediating factor between appropriating meaning and developing new identities. Learners make a conscious decision to join a community, and their decision has both immediate and future effects. Prior to joining the community, learners can prepare themselves by building language skills and developing a new identity that will allow them to interact in the imagined community. Their sense of closeness to the imagined community affects the amount of investment they make in it. As Kanno and Norton (2003) point out, imagined communities can also be based on past experiences, which can affect future action. Conflicts can occur when the imagined community based on previous experience differs from the present community.

### **Selected Studies Related to this Study**

The following studies have been selected to frame the present study in two ways. First, two qualitative studies are examined because this study uses narrative inquiry as its main methodological approach. After this, two-mixed method studies in which Japanese university students experience short-term stays of less than two months since this study has a similar time frame.

#### *(1) Qualitative Studies*

Drake (1997) used written feedback from an anonymous, free-write questionnaire based on seven general questions from 19 Japanese university students immediately after they returned from a six-week study abroad program in the United States. Drake concluded that although some of the students were dissatisfied with certain aspects of the program, the overall responses were supportive. She recommended that the university's study abroad program take active steps in helping visiting students better integrate into the various host communities. Although the study abroad program afforded many opportunities to the students to integrate into these communities, it seemed some of the participants were not prepared to do so. The study does not state whether the students had orientation classes prior to the trip. In addition, the questionnaire focused on the quality of the program by asking questions, such as "what activity did you like the best?" These types of questions make it difficult to know how much the students got out of the experience through their responses. One final drawback of the study is that information comes from only one source.



Geis and Fukushima (1997) used personal experiences and academic evaluations to examine a credited six-week study abroad program at a university in the United States. This study reported the basis for selecting the program in the United States and how the Japanese university handled any problems arising from the program. They reported that the pre- and post-TOEFL scores showed no statistically significant language proficiency gains. In addition, they stated that L2 learning motivation increased upon returning to Japan. They felt that students that participated in the study abroad program were observed as having greater participation in EFL classes in the second semester, especially when speaking about everyday topics. Although not stated clearly, it was assumed that Geis and Fukushima were actively involved in the decision-making process of the program and escorted the students to the United States. Their personal involvement gives us good insight on the decision-making process of the program, but the lack of confirming documents limits what can be drawn from their conclusion. They could have used a questionnaire to support their observations. Finally, as they noted the use of the TOEFL test is limited in a six-week program, a more sensitive test could have been selected to measure proficiency. Their choice of measurements seemed to be a reaction to the situation rather than a concrete plan.

## *(2) Mixed Method Studies*

Woodman (1998) conducted a mixed-method study in which 28 female university students were interviewed from a larger cohort of 384 Japanese students studying 3 weeks in Canada. She used the Linguistic, Perceptual, and Pedagogical Change (LPPC) Interactive Model of second language acquisition based on Gardner's 1985 socio-educational model and Woods' 1996 beliefs, attitudes, and knowledge (BAK) structure. She ran multiple statistical analyses of LPPC and compared the data with responses from interviews and questionnaires. The students stayed in a university dormitory, had a one-day homestay experience, and traveled to several cities outside their immediate area. Her results indicated that many of the students' and Japanese teachers' expectations of the program differed. Overall students expected more homework and tests would be given, whereas 7 of the 14 teachers interviewed did not expect this. The interviewed participants stated that they felt their listening skills improved initially and their speaking skills improved later in the program. Their perceived improvement also decreased their anxiety and increased their participation in extracurricular activities with native speakers of English. In order to confirm the participants' beliefs, she conducted a repeated ANOVA using eight variables related to speaking, such as utterance length or number of utterances. She confirmed in the statistical analysis the participants' belief that they made more utterances,  $p = .003$ , and at greater length,  $p = .056$ . With greater production in speaking, however, the learners also produced a greater number of errors, most of which were lexical,  $p = .023$ , or incomplete utterances,  $p = .001$ . She noted that these findings were consistent with the results of Moehle and Raupach (1983) in that accuracy decreases when fluency increases for study abroad students.

Fujioka and Agawa (2007) examined a four-week university study abroad program where 61 Japanese students went to the United States and stayed with host families, studied 20 hours a week in a classroom, and participated in various afternoon and weekend activities. The researchers administered a two-item questionnaire and had follow-up interviews with four selected students that participated voluntarily in a Japanese class helping American students. Their findings indicated that four features of the study abroad program affected student motivation. First, students that helped American students learn Japanese felt their motivation to learn English increased because they could reflect on their roles as a student, teacher, and friend. Second, the homestay environment helped increase motivation because the students realized they could not state their feelings adequately. Third, the classes increased motivation as the curriculum was designed to increase cultural awareness and improve communication skills. Finally, outside-of-class assignments, such as interviewing a local individual, appeared to increase motivation. Other than the drawbacks duly noted by the authors, this study had two additional shortcomings. First, the questionnaire was extremely limited in nature and did not measure motivation other than comparing the pre-departure



and post-return attitudes. The comparison leaves little room for interpretation. Second, the process for interviewing the participants was limited. They only had one 30-minute interview with each participant, and how much time had passed between the return and interview should have been stated. In addition to a more diverse selection of the interviewees, the authors could have examined how time might have influenced their motivation.

In sum, these studies indicate that short study abroad programs can be beneficial to students in several ways. First, it appears as if L2 learning motivation tends to increase, at least for the short term. Second, students often report an improvement in their receptive listening skills for short-term SA and improvements in their active speaking skills with longer-term SA. Third, extracurricular activities increase native speaker community contact, fostering more linguistic growth. Churchill and Dufon (2006) observed that “studies conducted in different programs and target language contexts could go a long way towards improving our understanding of what is learned, by whom and under what conditions.... [R]esearch on study abroad is potentially rich as ever and we are only beginning to reveal its complexities” (p. 27).

### Gaps in the Literature and Research Questions

As highlighted in the review, study abroad often appears to have many positive outcomes, such as linguistic development or cultural awareness. One gap in the literature is lack of understanding of study abroad programs that are shorter than one-month. Thus, the first purpose of the study was to find out what type of linguistic, cultural, and personal impact the study abroad program had on the students. A second gap is that little is known about the potential weaknesses in study abroad programs that can occur if the participants are “sheltered” in their stay-abroad program. Being sheltered includes the creation of island-like situations in which the participants are always grouped together in activities, such as group tours or in intact classes. The second purpose of this study was to find out how the participants felt about the sheltered activities.

The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How does the study abroad program fulfill student expectations in regards to language skills development?
2. What are the students’ expectations, if any, in regards to developing or understanding cultural knowledge from the study abroad experience?
3. How has the study abroad experience affected any self-reported personal development changes, such as volunteerism or self-confidence?

## Method

### Participants

Forty students went to the UK in 2012, and ten gave written permission (See Appendix A) to collect data. Three of these ten participants were chosen for two reasons. First, each participant came from a different proficiency group that they had been placed into at the start of their study abroad experience by an in-house exam. Second, only these participants were interviewed more than once due a variety of reasons. Table 1 provides basic background information about the three participants, all of whom have pseudonyms.

Table 1. *Description of the Participants*

Participant	Gender	Faculty	Grade	Age	Travel Year	1st Time Abroad
Amy	Female	Business	1	18	2012	No
Bess	Female	Literature	1	18	2012	No
Cass	Female	Business	1	18	2012	Yes

**Data Collection**

Data were collected according to the procedures outlined in Table 2.

Table 2. *Data Collection Sources*

Source of information	Collection place	Time	Comments
Field notes	Host institution	August 2012	These notes were written during my stay and once after I returned I wrote down additional reflections.
Study abroad summaries	Plane	Return flight	Students were required to write a personal account of their experience in Japanese to receive university credit. It is one page in length. Although I did not have access to these summaries, I asked the students what they wrote in the interviews.
Initial interview	Office	October-November 2012	This information is taken from the questions in Appendix A. During this time I explained the research project and asked for their assistance to do follow-up interviews at a later date.
Interview #1	Office	January-February 2013	These interviews were either individual or group depending on the student. Questions from Appendix B were used to guide the interview.
Interview #2	Office	March-April 2013	These interviews were either individual or group depending on the student. Questions from Appendix B were used to guide the interview.
Interview notes	Office	January-April 2013	After each interview session, I wrote down general impressions from the interview.
University's study abroad pamphlet	University	March 2013	Upon recommendation, the students were asked to write about their study abroad experience for this pamphlet. The university uses it as a recruiting tool now. Students interested in the study abroad program could read about the experiences.
Final follow-up check	Office	June 2013	All three participants were asked to read their comments taken from the interviews and confirm the accuracy. I know that their reading proficiency in English might be limited so I also went over the comments with them verbally.

It has been suggested that multiple interviews be conducted (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Seidman1998) as this can help build the relationship between the interviewer and interviewees, and



it also allow the interview to cover a larger range of information. Some of the information can be confirmed in the second interview. I decided to ask students to come in for multiple interviews. One semi-structured interview was conducted one-to-one, and the other(s) were conducted in a group. In the initial interview, they received questions related to the interview (See Appendix C), a release form to sign (See Appendix A), and a general explanation of the study. Thereafter arrangements were made to interview them. Interviews were conducted and recorded in my office from January to May 2013. After completing the interviews, the participants were given a gift card worth 1,000 yen.

The interviews covered a range of ideas. At the outset, I wanted to quickly get the participants' thoughts through a set of simple questions that could help me understand some of the issues and experiences of the students, and allow me to refer to personal information in order to highlight particular questions. I allowed either Japanese or English to be used in the interviews. As interviews are co-constructed, I felt it was necessary to use both languages. My Japanese speaking and listening skills are higher than most of the students' English skills, but most students do not know my proficiency level as I encourage them to use English with me. In the one-to-one interview, students mainly spoke in English, but in the group interviews, they often switched between Japanese and English. In cases where the Japanese became too complex for me, I asked the students to translate so that I could understand the conversation more fully. Afterwards, I asked a bilingual colleague to help clarify any misunderstandings on my part. In some cases, I used the group ideas in the one-to-one interviews. For the most part, I used the questions in Appendix D to frame the interview questions, but the students were encouraged to express any ideas related to their experience. Table 2 outlines the source of information and when the collection took place.

Each participant's timeline is slightly different because they were in different group interviews. Some did individual interviews prior to the group interview and vice versa. Amy's individual interview took place five months after she returned. Her group interview took place seven months after she returned. In the case of Bess, she had two group interviews prior to her individual interview. Both group interviews were around the five-month mark. Her individual interview took place about three weeks after the second group interview. Cass also had the group interview first, five months after return. Her individual interview was a month later.

## **Data Analysis**

After the interviews were transcribed, the participants' statements were analyzed in several ways. First, the responses from one question were gathered as one set. As the interviews were guided by the same set of questions, groupings of the responses were straightforward. Second, the responses were grouped according to key words or phrases. For example, the term *culture* was highlighted throughout the transcript. The statements made around the term were grouped together. The statements were then compared to the first set of groupings. Finally, the groupings were compared to dates and field notes. Any remaining information outside these filtering processes was ignored.

## **Findings**

### ***Research Question 1. Linguistic Expectations***

All three of the participants expected greater gains in language proficiency development through the program. All three students held the belief that their study abroad classes would offer better chances to speak English than in their Japanese EFL classes. Even though the participants' proficiency levels were different, they stated their Japanese EFL classes were not conducive for speaking. I sensed the students had an underlying bias toward their English classes with Japanese instructors because Amy and Cass have not had any classes with native English speakers in high school or university so far. They thought the classes in Japan focused on skills other than speaking or listening because their classmates were not capable of understanding the content, the Japanese



instructors were not patient enough, or the focus of the class was on the textbook. Amy was quick to point out the drawback of her EFL university classes.

At this university, many teachers speak English, but the students cannot understand what they say. I can understand, but other students can't understand, so the class is not going on..., and then stop...., then the teacher is going to speak Japanese.... And the textbook is really easy for me. (Group interview, seven months after return)

Bess stated something similar and compared her experience between the two universities by adding: The class style was not similar [between Japanese and British universities].... [Japanese teacher's name] want to us, students, more speak, but students don't speak. So, [Japanese teacher's name] only speaks. [British teacher's name] *wa kyouseitekini shaberaseru* [forces us to speak]. One question gave us and [British teacher's name] only listens .... *makaseru mitai* [teacher leaves it to us]. *Shaberinasai* [please speak]. (Individual interview, 6 months after return)

Cass also compared her experience between the two universities, remarking that:

In Japanese style is just ... book (mimics book). But, we almost write and just solve some questions.... Maybe typical Japanese style.... [British teacher's name] is really good to us. We never feel awkward or anything.... He made us more comfortable, so... we can more easily, say something. He can listen... and then fix it. (Individual interview, 6 months after return)

### ***Research Question 2. Cultural Expectations***

Similar to language skill development, all three students stated they wanted to experience British culture firsthand by visiting the country. Although not stated directly, I felt the students were distinguishing British cultural experiences in Japan differently than those in the host country. This was the first time for each of them to visit the UK, so the experience took on a touristic aspect. Most students ate traditional meals and visited pubs. Most of their comments centered on visiting well-known specific sites such as Abbey Road or Platform 9 3/4. All mentioned an interest in learning or partaking in the cultural traditions. Although Amy was not able to specifically identify any particular cultural point, her interest in experiencing it is clear from statements such as:

All tradition is really strong, all strong because like dancing or clothes...or other...food like that...so it's different than the US.... I don't think there is no... not no,... no tradition, like strong tradition. I know there is ...uh...Thanksgiving Day or something like that, but just only a special day.... I just wanna see and ...uh...try it in that country. (Individual interview, 5 months after return)

When pressed for further details, Amy admitted that she did not visit any sites outside the school-guided activities even though she remarked that there was enough time given. Once she was exposed to sites from the school-guided trips, she felt it was enough. There are several sites located near the university, but she made no attempt to visit those places again even though there was ample time and opportunity.

In their second interview, approximately six months after their return to Japan, the students were able to express more about their UK experience. All three felt the first interview helped them understand their UK experience more deeply especially questions related to culture. The second interview indicated that they compared Japanese culture to their UK cultural experience. Bess in particular thought the interviews helped her to think about and understand Japanese culture. Through the interview questions, she remembered explaining things to Chinese students about Japan. The question helped to think over her thoughts again.

When the students were asked if there should be more guided or structured cultural opportunities during their study abroad period, the idea was met with reluctance. Each student was asked specifically if they thought an after-class task related to a classroom idea would be appropriate. For example, one task could be to return a purchased item from a store. Each student stated that she did not like the idea and each one responded with the sentiment that the time after the



morning classes should be left open for them to decide what to do. Instead of connecting the classroom activities to tasks outside the classroom, the participants mainly offered practical ideas to help further their study abroad experience. The first idea was that some information should be given in a pre-departure orientation. One complaint about the program was that it took several weeks to figure out the basic transport system. If this information were given prior to departure, students would have more time to get involved early. The second idea for the program was that students from the previous years should give personal stories to the students intending to join the current study abroad program. The final idea was that students be given specific historical information prior to leaving so that they could enhance their experience. All three mentioned their lack of knowledge about the host country's history that limited their understanding of sites visited.

### ***Research Question 3. Personal Impact***

This section focuses on specific changes that the three participants thought occurred from the study abroad program.

Amy was asked if the study abroad event made a major impact on her and her response was, "ummm." For her, the program was a steppingstone, as she intends to study in the US after graduating. Her parents encouraged her to use the study abroad program as a way to become more independent prior to travelling abroad alone. Amy has been abroad more than ten times, but this was her first trip without her parents. From a slightly different perspective, Amy realized a conflict between her goals and situation in the study abroad context. After class, she often met friends and returned to the dormitory to socialize. She was disappointed by her behavior outside of the class because she was not using English after class, even though in the class she would use English with the same people she was socializing with. During the trip on several occasions she would approach me and speak in English. If her friends were present, she would speak some English and quickly translate it for her friends. I did not think the translations were necessary, but it seemed more of a conversation mechanism to keep the group atmosphere flowing and enjoyable for everyone.

Bess feels more confident in her English language skills and travelling abroad. She travelled to France for a week for the personal experience. She thought her UK experience helped her to be more active during the trip. In addition, she thought the first interview helped her to think about her linguistic, cultural, and personal experiences.

As for Cass, it was not clear what impact the study abroad experience had on her personally. She did not mention anything specifically other than she has relatives in the UK. Although all three mentioned they had changed, they were not sure the personal changes came from the study abroad experience. Rather, they thought any personal changes that occurred would have happened even if they had not taken part in the study abroad program. Beyond the experience of being abroad, the goals and motivation for Bess and Cass back in Japan were not clear.

Even six months after returning to Japan, the interviewees reported having trouble integrating their experiences in the U.K. with their lives in Japan, resulting in what La Brack (2012) has termed "shoeboxing": a tendency to avoid integrating the insights and skills obtained overseas with ones native pre-departure context. Most of the follow-up questions in regards to language development or cultural understanding were answered with a negative or uncertain response. As stated earlier, Amy used the study abroad program as a steppingstone, but she saw the experience as an encapsulated event outside of her university life in Japan. Even though she was disappointed and critical of herself at times, there were many positive events that outweighed the negative ones. In the case of Bess, she had travelled abroad between the second and third interview, and her comments changed. At first, when asked if she would keep her positive studying attitude from the study abroad program for the university English language classes in the coming year, she responded, "ummm...Not sure." However, in her written remarks for incoming students to the study abroad program, she wrote, "don't be afraid to say something." After returning from France, she felt the UK study abroad experience helped her because she had realized through the interviews with me how the experience could help her. Interestingly though, she is reluctant to use her



knowledge in her university courses. Notice how Cass contrasts her French classes from her English classes:

My English class is really typical Japanese style, but ... Lucky, my French teacher was is so nice, ...so more comfortable, so many students can speak or something easily.

In the cases of Bess and Cass, the general feeling was that the class culture at their Japanese university limited their L2 interaction and motivation. In effect, for them it is the teacher that provides motivation to the class to allow them to be active. They do not consider their role in the class atmosphere as the most important variable.

## Discussion

The aim of this study was to examine the study abroad experience of the students from several perspectives. The first perspective of language, cultural, and personal changes has reinforced ideas supporting study abroad programs. In one aspect, it supports Kolb's (1984) model of concrete experience in that all of the participants were satisfied with the study abroad program. They felt they made improvements in their language skills, but more importantly, they experienced a new learning environment. For the second and third stages, the participants experienced a different cultural setting first-hand and adjusted to it through personal decision-making. They could make the choice of how involved they wanted to be. The final stage of active conceptualization was successful for one participant because she could use the experience in her personal travel to France. However, their conceptualization remains limited in that their learning experience in UK has not been transferred back to Japan. The participants were happy with the experience, but upon returning to Japan, they went back to their previous norms of behavior, especially in their English classes. Additionally, the participants have not engaged in any other study abroad programs so far. All three participants stated they would be more aggressive in creating opportunities for communication outside the classroom.

As Norton (2001) pointed out, the social contextual conditions can affect the participants' imagined communities and motivation. In this study abroad experience, all three participants were excited to "touch the culture" of Britain. However, the short time span and sheltered activities limited their interactions with the community. It was clear the participants wanted to participate in the study abroad classroom differently than in their university classroom. In both cases though, the participant's desire was affected by the teacher's willingness to control the class and their classmates' willingness to speak. In Japan, they were passive and did not see how their behavior influenced the classroom dynamic. Outside the classroom, the participants were able to enjoy cultural sites, but these experiences were conducted in Japanese. The participants admitted that in large group excursions, they spoke to each other in Japanese because it was convenient. Outside the classroom, they felt it odd to speak to each other in English. Additionally, by staying together in a group, they were less likely to join community activities. In essence, they changed from being students to being tourists. The change is not necessarily negative. It did provide an opportunity for students to understand their experiences in a shared way. By being in a group, students could feel safe in approaching people in the community in a limited way.

As stated previously, students lacked any detailed background knowledge of the UK. They were unaware of certain historical features and characters and that made it difficult to have a culturally meaningful or rich experience. All three participants mentioned that greater understanding prior to arriving in the UK would have given them more opportunities to appreciate their experience.

The participants' responses have implications for teachers and the study abroad program. First, teachers can use the events outside the classroom as teaching opportunities. They can highlight how being in a group can help the students take on tasks that would not do alone. They can help students recognize these situations so that they become more aware of them and handle them more effectively in the future. As for program organizers, it is important that they are aware of



island-like activities. Although keeping students together for transport is efficient, alternative activities need to be incorporated so that the students can benefit from the groupings as well.

This study differs from previous study abroad research in two ways. First, it calls into question the claim made by Drake (1997) that student-organized activities lead to greater participation in the host community. The interactions by the participants in this study with the host community were limited to the role of customers in a shop. Basically, they bought and consumed goods from a shop, but they did not interact socially beyond that. It is also noteworthy that the students expressed no desire for more guided activities to join the host community. In essence, the “study abroad” experience was offered like a consumer product in which the participants casually “consumed” it. The participants’ linguistic and cultural identities throughout the program remained firmly Japanese.

Second, this study also should lead us to question the claim by Geis and Fukushima (1997), and Fujioka and Agawa (2007) that EFL students returning from study abroad actively engage in their English classes more than other students upon returning to Japan. Although the students in this study felt that their English communication had improved, they felt they could not speak more in class because of uncooperative classmates or the focus on their textbooks. As Ellis (2008) pointed out, learners’ beliefs derive from a variety of sources and can be constrained by the environment in which the learner is situated. The amount of learning is influenced by the strength of the learners’ beliefs and how willing they are to act on them in the learning environment. The interviews and observations indicate that the students allowed the learning environment to influence their actions in the classroom. Outside the classroom, the study abroad program added to their maturation process of becoming more confident and independent.

## Conclusion

Two features of this study seem particularly salient. First, participants’ responses suggest that their English language usage was highly situation-dependent. Although all three students were passive in their EFL classes in Japan both before and after their study abroad experiences, their L2 self-efficacy while in the UK appears to have temporarily increased. This suggests that L2 self-efficacy - unlike L2 identity - is situational. The participants felt that English use in Japanese classroom contexts was artificial and they were more inclined to use their mother tongue in Japan. Overseas however, English use was expected and the participants seemed more willing to make tentative attempts to use English for communicative purposes. The perceived classroom dynamics of British and Japanese English classes also differed: the students felt the British classes were somehow “more authentic”.

Second, the participants were underprepared for the cultural experiences. They admitted having very limited knowledge of the host country. The university’s orientation did not prepare them well enough to maximize their time overseas. In addition, the participants restricted themselves to island-like activities such as traveling in groups to historic spots outside the host university.

There are several limitations to this study. First, only three first year participants were involved due to interview constraints. Future research should include a greater number of respondents of varied academic year and gender. A second limitation is that the participants used English when giving most of their responses. Perhaps many thought of the interviews as a means of practicing their English. At any rate, interview responses may have been affected by linguistic constraints. Future research should offer participants the option of interacting with a proficient Japanese interlocutor. A final limitation concerns the short time frame of this study. These interviews were conducted during a small window of changes in the participants’ lives. The changes in thoughts and emotions of these young participants might be different in a year from now. Future studies should attempt to examine the possible impact of study abroad from a longer time frame.

Although this study abroad experience was enjoyable for the participants, the evidence from this study suggests it needs to develop further. In particular, the pre-departure and post-return



components of the program should be expanded. The university has begun to take some steps in that direction. In 2013 they added an extra orientation day for returning students to talk about their experiences. In addition, the same year they added a 20-item questionnaire on expectations of the study abroad program for participants to complete prior to departure. Due to time constraints and budgeting issues, the university has not taken any steps to develop its post-return orientation program. Future research might examine how a post-return component of the program could be implemented. A final avenue might be to examine how short-term and long-term study abroad outcomes differ.

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## Appendix A. Original Japanese Informed Consent Form

### 同意書

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

#### 研究の概要

本研究のねらいは、日本人学生がこのような短期留学プログラムに参加することによって、よりよく言語学習が体験できるかを研究することです。私がこの研究のために使用する資料は、次のものです。

- (1) この短期留学プログラムに引率として参加する私自身の観察。
- (2) 短期留学を運営している学校事務局に提供された書類。
- (3) 学生とのインタビュー。

#### 協力者の権利

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

#### 研究協力に関する同意書

私は、この書類に記述されている研究に協力することに同意します。私は、この協力は任意であり、研究者ポール・ホーネスに申し出ることによって、いつでもこの協力を撤回することができることとします。私は、本同意書の署名済みのコピーを受け取ることとします。

---

名前 (楷書)

---

署名

/

日付

私は、この研究への協力のために本質と目的を説明し、協力者の権利を説明し、挙げられた質問に対して回答致しました。

---

研究者の署名

/

日付

## Appendix B. English Translation of the Original Informed Consent Form

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



**Explanation of the study**

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

**Your rights as a research participant**

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

**Your consent to participate in this study**

I agree to participate in the research project that has been described in this document. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I may withdraw from this study at any time by telling the researcher, Paul Horness. I understand that I will receive a signed copy of this consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name (please print)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

I have explained the nature and purpose of this study to the participants. I have explained their rights as participants and I have answered any questions that have been raised.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Researcher's Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Appendix C. Individual Interview Core Questions**

1. Had you been abroad prior to this trip?            A. Yes            B. No
2. What English skill is your strongest?  
A. Reading            B. Writing            C. Speaking            D. Listening
3. What English skill is your weakest?  
A. Reading            B. Writing            C. Speaking            D. Listening
4. Did you think your English lessons would be different from your English lessons at this university?            A. Yes            B. No
5. Prior to the trip, did you speak or use English outside of class besides to your English teachers? If so, where? \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Did you think the university's preparation such as the orientation was sufficient?  
A. Yes            B. No
7. How did your parents feel about you going to Celtic University?



A. Nervous    B. Supportive    C. Other

8. Were you worried about anything?                    A. Yes            B. No
9. Were you satisfied with the cost of the trip?                    A. Yes            B. No
10. Overall, were you satisfied with the trip?    A. Yes            B. No            C. Undecided

#### **Appendix D. Group Interview Core Questions**

1. Did you speak to native speakers outside the class or non-related activities?
2. What surprised you most about your stay?
3. Do you feel your English has improved?
4. Have your feelings about learning English changed as a result of the program?
5. What was the best experience for you in the program?
6. What was the worst experience for you in the program?
7. Do you think you will be more active in English classes at the university from now on?
8. Do you plan to improve your English in the future?
9. Do you think this experience will help you get a job in the future?
10. Do you think your views of UK culture have changed?
11. Do you think your views of Japanese culture have changed?
12. What are some good things about people in the UK?
13. What are some bad things about people in the UK?
14. What are some good things about life in UK?
15. What are some bad things about life in UK?
16. After reading your written comments for the university, have you anything to change?
17. Do you have any other comments about your experiences in the program? What are they?