

短期留学は効果的であるか？

古 屋 則 子*

Evaluating a Short-Term Study Abroad Program

Noriko Furuya

要 旨 毎年、英語圏で短期留学プログラムを実施する大学、短大、専門学校等の教育機関は非常に多いと報告されているが、その効果を評価する研究は少ないのが現状である。当研究は文化女子大学の現代文化学部で実施されている短期留学プログラムの目的を明確にし、これらの目的が達成されているか評価するため、エスノグラフィーに基づく方法を用い検討を試みた。当研修に参加した多くの学生は英語力や英語を学ぶことに対するモチベーションにおいてだけでなく、自主性、社会問題に対する意識においても研修の効果が得られるという結果が確認された。

Introduction

The Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences (Gendaibunkagakubu) of Bunka Women's University (BWU) offers an in-house short-term study abroad program in Seattle, Washington for approximately three weeks every summer. It is referred to as the Overseas Study Program (OSP). The program originated in the early 1990s, the height of the bubble economy, and with enrollment at BWU at peak capacity, the OSP initially involved close to 200 students at one time. Since then, the declining student population and dwindling economy have meant a considerable decrease in the number of participants. In the wake of 9-11, the numbers dropped dramatically to 35 students in 2002, 13 in 2003, and slightly up to 17 in 2004. This decline in recent years has provided an upside, however. In the past, the huge numbers dictated that the outings be of the sightseeing type (e.g. Space Needle) which could accommodate several busloads of students, and prevented the planning of activities which engaged the students in close interaction with the target culture and community.

In the last few years, the OSP evolved into the type of program that the staff had envisioned as ideal for the students of BWU. Although the members of the staff seemed to agree that the goals of the program were being met, the OSP had never systematically been evaluated for its effectiveness. This paper is an attempt at formally defining the goals of the OSP, and to determine if these goals are being achieved. Incidentally, there has been a dearth of studies done on the effects of study abroad programs done by Japanese students, although it has been reported that several hundred Japanese institutions send their students on such programs in the months of February and March

* 本学助教授 社会言語学

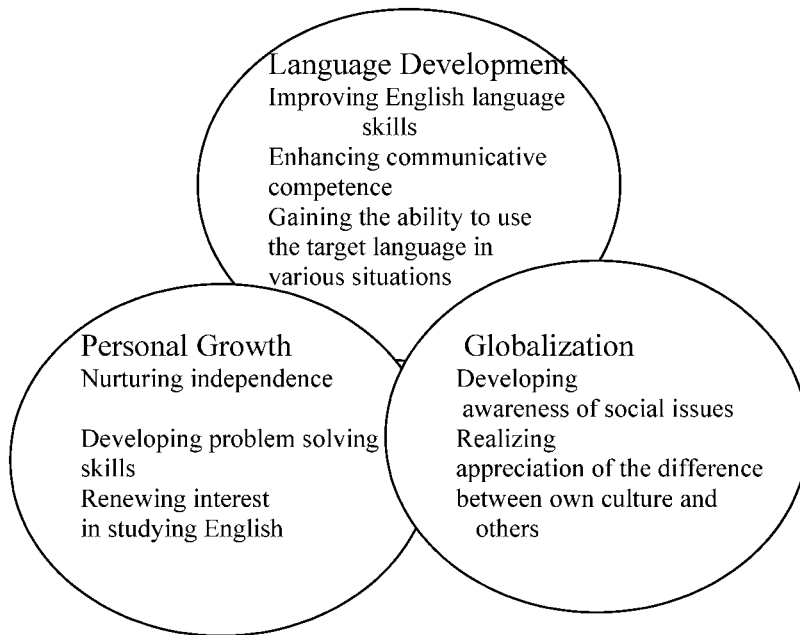


Figure 1

and July and August to English-speaking countries such as the United States, Canada, Britain, Ireland, Australia, and New Zealand every year (Blanche, 2002).

The goals of the OSP are manifold, but fall into three main categories, Language Development, Personal Growth and Globalization. All of these are inter-related, as can be seen in Figure 1. The most obvious is Language Development, involving such factors as the improving of English language skills, enhancement of communicative competence, and gaining the ability to use English in a variety of situations in the target culture. The Personal Growth category includes factors such as nurturing independence and problem solving skills, as well as renewing motivation for studying English. The Globalization category involves awareness of social issues, and the appreciation of the differences between one's own culture and others.

The scarcity of research documenting the effectiveness of study-abroad programs has meant that there is virtually no existing framework to use when one wishes to implement such a study. Therefore a combination of questionnaires, journal entries, and observation were utilized. The study is based on the premises of ethnography, explained by Nunan as, "the study of the culture/characteristics of a group in real-world rather than laboratory settings." The researcher makes no attempt to isolate or manipulate the phenomena under investigation and insights and generalizations emerge from close contact with the data rather than from a theory of language learning and use (1992: 55).

The Participants

This study evaluates the most current Overseas Study Program, held from September 1 to September 20, 2004, a period of approximately three weeks. The participants were 17 young women ranging in ages from 18 to 21. The writer acted as the teacher escort, and was available to the students virtually 24 hours a day for the duration of the program. The group was comprised of two 1st year students majoring in Fashion, eleven 2nd year students majoring in English Language and Literature, and four 3rd year students majoring in Health Psychology. Their English abilities were varied, regardless of major, from false beginner to intermediate. The only available English proficiency scores were those from the most recent TOEIC given on campus. These scores ranged from 275 to 490. Although all of the students had access to the TOEIC, of the OSP participants, only the English majors had taken the test. Consequently, no scores were available for the six non-English majors.

For 8 of the 17 students, this program was their first time to go overseas. With the exception of two students, none of them had gone abroad for a period of more than one week. Furthermore, the majority of the students (11 out of 17) live at home with their parents, which means that for most of them, it was the first time that they left their parents for a relatively extended period of time. As is often the case with Japanese college students, none of these students are working their way through school, relying solely on their parents to pay for tuition and housing.

The reasons for participating in the program were varied, the top two reasons being their desire to participate in a homestay (6) and their wish to improve their English skills (7). The breakdown of reasons is as follows:

(Multiple answers were allowed)

| | |
|---|---|
| Homestay | 6 |
| Improving English skills | 7 |
| Learning about American culture | 3 |
| Desire to go to the U.S. | 3 |
| Desire to be in the target culture | 2 |
| To experience independence (i.e. to be away from her parents) | 1 |
| Had been reason for choosing to study at BWU | 1 |
| Good experience to go to the U.S. as part of her studies at BWU | 1 |
| Felt faculty-escorted trip was safer than going alone | 2 |
| Wanted to try out her English in the target culture | 1 |

Homestay and Curriculum

The Overseas Study Program is comprised of two inter-related components, the homestay and curriculum. The homestay and related services are provided by a local homestay agency, while the curriculum (including EFL classes as well as field trips and other activities) is coordinated by a university or college. This year, Bellevue Community College (BCC) located in Bellevue, an affluent

suburb of Seattle, was chosen to provide the Curriculum component. As a university sponsored program, the “academic” factor cannot be overlooked; however, it has always been felt that for the purposes of this program, the homestay experience has been the more significant. As mentioned above, it is for many of the students, the first time that they are spending an extended period of time in a foreign country, let alone away from their parents. It is important to keep in mind that the students with which we are concerned have essentially been pampered by their parents, emotionally, as well as financially.

Paige (1993) states ten hypotheses related to what he refers to as intensity of intercultural experiences. The one pertaining to the degree of immersion in the target culture is especially relevant, namely that the more one “is immersed in the target culture, the higher the degree of psychological intensity” (p. 7). For the entire time that they are in Seattle, the students are completely immersed in the target culture. To expect them to do academically taxing tasks under these conditions is unreasonable. Furthermore, since the students physically spend a substantial amount of time at home with their host families when they are not on campus, it is inevitable that this aspect of the program will be most significant. Having had ten years of experience with similar programs, the writer will personally testify that the success of these programs hinges on whether or not the students have satisfying homestay experiences.

Discussion

Language Development

Did the most recent Overseas Study Program achieve the goals outlined above? Studies have shown negligible if any gains in English proficiency, based on pre and post-testing of short-term study abroad participants (Geis & Fukushima, 1997; Drake, 1997; Bodycott and Crew, 2000). Perhaps theories of Second Language Acquisition briefly discussed below, can partially explain the reason for the failure of tests to gauge short-term gains in language proficiency. However, several studies have reported improvement by the students themselves in terms of ability, confidence, and motivation for further study (Hansel, 1986; Drake, 1997; Geis & Fukushima, 1997; Bodycott & Crew, 2000; Tateyama, 2002).

The responses to the question, “Do you think your English has improved? How?” on the post-program questionnaire used for this study indicated similar results. In fact, all 17 participants answered positively when it came to this item. Although a few of them were ambivalent, for the most part, they reported improvement, especially in the area of listening. An overwhelming number (10) mentioned that their listening skills improved. Perhaps three weeks is just enough time for them to get used to listening to English, and it will take at least another couple of weeks for them to actively utilize their speaking skills. I would like to mention two models of Second Language Acquisition that may offer a partial explanation to this. McLaughlin’s Attention Processing Model (McLaughlin, 1978; McLaughlin, Rossman & McLeod, 1983) explains information processing as a continuum ranging from Controlled (where the processes are limited and temporary) to Automatic (where the

processes are used to accomplish a number of difficult skills at the same time). According to this model, the processing mechanisms work together with categories of attention, referred to as Focal and Peripheral, to form four cells. At the end of the three weeks, the students seemed to be in the Peripheral-Controlled cell, which in practical terms, means that they were able to produce simple greetings and participate in brief conversations. The goal of second language learners is peripheral, automatic attention-processing or as Brown (2000) explains simply as, “normal conversational exchanges of some length.”

Bialystok (1987) and Ellis (1997) have proposed models of language acquisition where they make a distinction between explicit and implicit knowledge. Explicit knowledge is knowledge about language and the ability to state this knowledge (e.g. grammar rules), whereas implicit knowledge is the ability to use language automatically without necessarily knowing the rules. This model also incorporates a distinction between automatic and non-automatic processing, based on McLaughlin’s concepts of automaticity. The important factor here is time, that is, the amount of time that is required to access the knowledge. If the knowledge can be retrieved with relative ease and speed, it is automatic, whereas if it takes effort and time, it is non-automatic.

These models suggest that the perceived complexity of a language task will affect the length of time it takes for students to perform. Thus, it seems fair to assume that at the end of the three weeks, the language processing mechanisms of many of these students were in a state of flux, and had they been able to stay in the target culture for a little while longer, they might have been able to access their knowledge of the language, both explicit and implicit, using automatic processes.

Personal Growth

All of the students were asked to keep a journal* for the duration of the stay. Part of the writer’s affinity to journals comes from her experience as a teacher of writing. Journal writing has been reported to be one of the writing activities which most students enjoy doing and have been regarded as a source of motivation for many ESL and EFL learners (Peyton & Reed, 1990; Staton, 1987; Dupenthaler, 2002; Matsuda, 2003). During her more than ten years of experience coordinating and escorting homestay programs, it was customary for her to request students to hand in a journal entry at least once a week, and it had always provided useful information regarding their homestay situation and the program in general. Often it clued her into the problems they were having with their host families, and helpful in determining whether the fault lay with the student or the host family when problems arose. This was the first time that the writer asked all of the students to keep a journal during the entire period of their stay, beginning with an entry written on the plane en route to Seattle. They were collected twice, the first time after one week had passed, and returned with feedback a few days later. They were collected the second and last time prior to dismissal at Narita Air-

* The writer has received prior approval from the students to use their journal entries in published material. In order to ensure privacy, all names have been changed.

port upon the group's return to Japan. It is believed that these journals were candid reports of the students' three weeks in the United States. Inevitably, most of them had to do with their host families, good and bad.

From their journal entries and daily observation, it was evident that the students developed a sense of independence in these three weeks, simply by being put into difficult situations with which they had to cope, in a foreign country without the aid of their Japanese parents, and having to use English as their medium of communication. Most, if not all, of these problems had to do with their host families.

By highlighting one student's experience, the reader will hopefully gain an understanding of the scope of their problem solving skills and the degree of their maturity despite their often painful experiences. Mika is a 2nd year English major who commutes to BWU from her parents' home. Her previous journal entries (she happens to take the writer's Writing class) have indicated a closeness to her Japanese family. Her only experience abroad had been a one-week trip to Hawaii with her family.

From overheard conversations, it was apparent that Mika was having problems with her host mother, Monica. Monica was allegedly extremely busy, and had no time for the new member of the family, the Japanese student, Mika. On the other hand, the host father, Keith, tried to make time for her, and came to pick her up after school by car or on his prized motorbike, and he was the one who cooked her breakfast and dinner. During the first weekend, a serious flare-up ensued resulting from miscommunication between Mika and her host parents. Suffice it to say that Mika and Monica started off on the wrong foot and things never were set right. However, despite her angry tears over the weekend fiasco, Mika never once complained outright, and managed to deal with her unhappy situation, by saying that although her host mother tended to be bad-tempered and unfair, her host father was extremely kind. Her anger was apparent in one of her journal entries: "When I got to house with Keith, Monica didn't make dinner. She didn't have work (in the) afternoon. I can't understand. Keith made chili dog for me and I ate. Keith is really kind. Monica make good dinner only when her sons come to the home. I don't like her but I like Keith so much."

Mika had mixed feelings when she expressed concerned about another student who seemingly had a more serious situation with her host family. She wrote: "I am worry about Kayoko. She said, I want to come America again, not homestay, (but) dormitory. I was little relief. I agree her. I want to come here again. But, tell the truth, I wanted to have time with kind host mother. When I look at the sight of my friend and their host mother talking friendly, I am little bit sad. But Keith always help me, so I do my best."

Despite her not so glowing experiences with her host family Mika still remains positive about the program. Her last journal entry indicated a renewed interest in studying English and a fondness for America. "I'm really happy. I'm coming home. Finally, my summer's big event was finish. I had many accidents but my motivation is up! So I think it was good for me to join this program. I think I will study hard from now. I want to go to America again."

Globalization

The BCC curriculum included several opportunities for the students to speculate on social issues that are of a global nature. These included talks by guest speakers (with Japanese translation provided), guided visits, and several hours of American Sign Language lessons. As can be seen by Figure 2, a number of different issues were addressed.

The students' journal entries regarding these activities were positive, and often seemed to have sparked an interest in the subject. The following excerpts were thought to be significant.

“Today I went to Child Care Center. And I looked around that center. American education system is very different from Japanese one. And maybe the concept of education is also different.” (Akiko, September 7)

“Today learned ASL. It was interesting. But it was a little hard. I want to learn Japanese Sign Language too.” (Maho, September 9)

“I went to the Food Bank in Seattle. I came to realize importance of rice. I thought it was bad Japanese way of thinking about homeless and the poor.” (Yuriko, September 10)

“When I listened to Disability Services, I thought it was great that accept handicapped person in America. I hope Japanese should follow American example.” (Yuriko, September 14)

“I had the lesson of Disability Agency. This lesson made me think many things. I was very impressed by her word of “We can do everything. Nothing we can't do. Dreams come true.” I think we should have relationship with them and we should think and know more about them.” (Mika, September 14)

“I went to school. We listened about BCC Disability Services. I thought, “Why there isn't like this services in Japan. I hope to make many like this services in future.” (Sayoko, September 14)

“We learned about Disability Services. I found about that there is many disability law. In Japan, there isn't preparation for disability yet. I'll study about disability in Japan.” (Ayu, September 14)

Conclusion

Through the most recent Overseas Study Program held in Seattle, Washington, the students in general, seemed to have made overall gains in the three categories, Language Development, Personal Growth and Globalization. Although pre- and post-tests of English proficiency were not used to gauge differences in ability before and after the OSP, the majority of the students reported improvement particularly in listening and more confidence in speaking English. All of the students exhibited

| Activity | Relevant Social Issues |
|--|-----------------------------------|
| BCC Daycare Visit | Childcare, Single Parents |
| American Sign Language Lessons (1) | Opportunities for Disabled People |
| Volunteer Work at Food Bank | Volunteerism, Homelessness |
| High School Visit | American Education |
| BCC Disability Services Talk and Visit (2) | Opportunities for Disabled People |
| BCC Career Services Talk | Working Women |

Figure 2

- (1) Lessons given by hearing impaired teacher.
- (2) Talk and visit provided by the director of Disability Services, who is visually impaired, and her ASL translator.

signs of personal growth, having coped successfully with the stresses of being abroad, and living with members of the target community for an extended period of time. Some showed extreme resilience in spite of painful homestay experiences. The majority of the students manifested interest in social issues and a genuine appreciation for people who were different from them such as the homeless, and the disabled. On a final note, this short-term study abroad program provided invaluable opportunities, and undoubtedly has made them more responsible, global citizens of tomorrow's Japan. As Weaver aptly states (1993: 139):

The overseas experience offers a new social milieu in which to examine one's behavior, values and thought patterns... We may discover things about ourselves that allow for great personal growth.

References

- Bettina, H. (1986). The AFS Impact Study: Final Report. *AFS Research Report 33*. New York: AFS International/Intercultural Programs, Inc, ERIC Clearing House on Social Studies/Social Science Education. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 285795).
- Bialystok, E. (1987). A theoretical model of second language learning. *Language Learning* 28, 69–83.
- Blanche, P. (2002). What should be known in Japan about short-term English study abroad. *The Language Teacher*, 26(12), 13–18.
- Bodycott, P. & Crew, V. (2000). Living the language: The value of short-term overseas English language immersion programs. *The Language Teacher*, 24(9), 27–33.
- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. White Plains: Addison Wesley Longman.
- Drake, D. (1997). Integrating study abroad students into the university community. *The Language Teacher*, 21(11), 7–13, 29.
- Duppenthaler, P. (2002). The effect of three types of written feedback on student motivation. *JALT Journal*, 24(2), 130–151.
- Ellis, R. (1997). *SLA Research and Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Geis K. L, & Fukushima, C. (1997). Overview of a study abroad course. *The Language Teacher*, 21(11), 15–20.
- Matsuda, Sae (2003). What Counts as Success? A Sense of Achievement in Language Learning Diaries. *The Language Teacher*, 27(8), 13–16.
- McLaughlin, B. (1987). *Theories of Second Language Learning*. London: Edward Arnold.

- McLaughlin, B., Rossman, T., & McLeod, B. (1983). Second language learning: An information-processing perspective. *Language Learning* 33: 135–158.
- Nunan, D. (1992). *Research methods in language learning*. Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Paige, R. M. (1993). *On the nature of intercultural experiences and intercultural education*. In R.M. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the Intercultural Experience*. Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, Inc.
- Peyton, J. K. & Reed, L. (1990). *Dialogue journal writing with nonnative English speakers: A handbook for teachers*. Alexandria, VA: TESOL.
- Staton, J. (1987). *The power of responding in dialogue journals*. In T. Fulwiler (Ed.), *The Journal Book* (pp. 47–63). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.
- Tateyama, E. (2002). The Response of Japanese Nursing Students to a Vacation English Program Abroad. ERIC Clearing House on Languages and Linguistics. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 472141).
- Weaver, G. (1993). *Understanding and coping with cross-cultural adjustment stress*. In R.M. Paige (Ed.), *Education for the Intercultural Experience*. Yarmouth, Maine: Intercultural Press, Inc.

Appendix 1

August 30, 2004

Pre-Departure Questionnaire

Name: _____ Major: _____ Year: _____

A.

1. Is this your first time to go abroad? YES NO

2. If you answered, NO for Question 1, please write about your overseas experience.

| Where? | For how long? | When? (How old were you?) | What kind of trip was it? |
|--------|---------------|--------------------------------|--|
| Hawaii | 1 week | 2001 16 years old 2nd yr. H.S. | Summer vacation with family (package tour) |
| | | | |
| | | | |

If you need more space, please use the back of this sheet.

3. Why did you choose to participate in this program?

4. What are your goals for this program?

5. What are you worried about?

6. What are you looking forward to doing in Seattle?

B. English Background

1. Do you have any qualifications related to English?

(Eiken, TOEIC score, TOEFL score)

| Type of qualification | When did you take the test? |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|
| | |
| | |
| | |

2. Of the four skills (Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing) in English you are strongest in:

- a. Speaking b. Listening c. Reading d. Writing

3. Of the four skills (Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing) in English you are weakest in:

- a. Speaking b. Listening c. Reading d. Writing

4. Which English classes (Speaking, Listening, Reading, Writing, Test Preparation, etc.) have you taken (or currently taking) at BWU?

5. Do you do anything outside of class to improve your English?

C. Other

1. Do you live at home? YES NO

2. a. If you answered NO for Question 1, how much money do your parents send you for living expenses every month? _____

b. What do you use this money for? (utilities, food, etc.)

3. Do you have a part time job? YES NO

4. a. If you answered YES, for Question 3, how much money do you make per month?

b. How do you use this money? _____

5. Are your parents paying for the entire cost of this program? YES NO

If you answered NO, please explain.

6. Is any of YOUR money being used for taking part in this program? YES NO

If you answered YES, please explain.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION!

Appendix 2

Post-Program Questionnaire

About your English

1. Do you think your English has improved? How?
2. How did your host family help you learn English?
3. Were the ESL classes at BCC useful for learning English? YES NO
If YES, what activities were useful?

If NO, why?

4. Has this program motivated you to study English more? YES NO
Please explain your answer.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COOPERATION