Changes in Student Affective Factors Resulting from an EFL Study Abroad Program to a non-English Speaking Country

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Abstract   This paper will set the stage for an ensuing longitudinal study to investigate the affective outcomes of a short-term study abroad (SA) program. Japanese university students participating in this program will study English in a non-English speaking country. This investigation will seek to determine if significant changes occur in four affective factors, self-confidence, language anxiety, integrative motivation and willingness to communicate (WTC). This paper will extract research data from the most up-to-date sources and synthesize the information into an argument to support an upstart of these types of study abroad programs.

Keywords: study abroad, integrative motivation, willingness to communicate, self-confidence, language anxiety

非英語圏への留学プログラムによって生じる学生の情緒面における変化

ランス　ブロース

要旨　ここで取り上げる日本の大学の留学生は、英語習得を目的としていながらも、英語を公用語としない国に短期留学する予定である。この留学経験が彼らの情緒面にどのような影響を及ぼすかを検証するため継続調査を実施するが、本稿ではその調査に先立ち、諸点をまとめる。当調査では、自信、言語学習における不安、統合的動機付け、コミュニケーションに対する積極的な態度、以上4つの心理的側面において、顕著な変化が認められるか否か検証を試みる。今後このような留学プログラムの立ち上げを支援できるよう、本稿では最新の情報源から抽出したデータをもとに、議論を進めたい。

キーワード：留学、統合的動機付け、コミュニケーションに対する積極的な態度、自信、言語学習における不安

Introduction

Study abroad (SA) is defined by Freed (1995) as a period of residence in another country or province where the target language is spoken, combined with classroom-based language and/or content area study.

Seen by many as an integral part of any foreign language (FL) curriculum, research literature tells us that the benefits from SA programs are abundant and diverse. Early literature from the 1950's expounded the effects of SA in relation to students and regarding "cross-cultural interactions... the increase in knowledge and language skills of other countries and changes in attitudes and career goals" (Kraft, Ballantine, and Garvey, 1994, p. 29). Participants in SA were found to be more reflective, more prepared to help others, more knowledgeable with respect to international affairs, and more self-confident. In addition, SA participants may develop cross-cultural skills and knowledge that are essential in the ever-changing world of globalization (Chieffo & Zisper, 2001; Laubscher, 1994). SA has shown to promote world-mindedness, independence, tolerance for ambiguity, self-esteem and empathy (Carlson & Widaman, 1988; Laubscher, 1994).

Due to the abundance of these potential advantages, possible negative ramifications of SA often go unnoticed in mainstream literature. Day (1987) reminds us that a short length stay may entail superficial contact with the host culture, inadequate language practice, a group orientation that might isolate them from the host culture, and a vacation mentality that works against an academic atmosphere. Furthermore, Wilkinson (1998, 2000) postulates that students may arrive in the host country with cultural and linguistic assumptions that may contribute to less interaction in the FL. Further research revealed that exposure to cultural differences did not necessarily lead to cross-cultural understanding. Indeed, Krashen (1985) warns that feelings of anxiety could limit language learning instead of enhancing it. Low motivation to integrate into the target culture could also lead to further negative ramifications in relation to language learning (Tremblay & Gardner, 1995).

Clearly, there is plenty of research, both supporting SA and warning of the possible negative ramifications of SA. All of the above studies, however, refer to situations in which the participants were studying the L1 of the inhabitants of the country in which they were doing their SA. In a recent phenomenon in Asia, EFL students have been offered opportunities to study English in non-English speaking countries (e.g., the Philippines, Thailand). This paper will review various studies concerning the

affective factors, self-confidence, willingness to communicate, language anxiety, and integrative motivation and synthesize the information into an explanation about how participating in a SA to a non-English speaking country could be beneficial for Japanese EFL students.

Background

Foreign Language Anxiety

Foreign language courses provoke more anxiety than any other courses for many students. Being forced to produce intelligible utterances in a tongue other than our own mother tongue can be for some, very frightening. MacIntyre and Gardner (1989) postulate that language learning anxiety is too specific to be measured by general anxiety measures. The "anxiety" instigated by a student's responsibilities in a FL class are considered unique to other kinds of anxiety that he might encounter in life.

In educational research, there are generally two classifications of anxiety, trait or state. Trait anxiety is considered a personality trait, rather stable, while state anxiety, on the contrary, is a temporary condition experienced at a specific time. A third type of anxiety, situation specific anxiety, a trait that occurs in specific situations, has also been considered (Spielberger, Anton, & Bedell, 1976). Research has supported the claim that language learning anxiety is situation specific, where one's anxiety will be tipped in a specific situation, particularly classrooms.

Horwitz, Horwitz, and Cope (1986) further developed this idea of specific situation anxiety by dividing it into three components: communication apprehension, test anxiety, and fear of negative evaluation. Horwitz et al define foreign language anxiety as "a distinct complex of self-perceptions, beliefs, feelings, and behaviors related to classroom learning arising from the uniqueness of the language learning process" (p. 128).

Furthermore, anxiety has been shown to play a debilitating role in the learning of foreign languages, crippling learners from being able to express themselves in the L2 even if they were equipped with the linguistic knowledge and tools necessary to complete a particular language exchange. Woodrow (2006) expounds that the anxiety experienced in in-class situations is a different construct from anxiety encountered in outside-of-class situations. English as a Second Language (ESL) learners were shown to have relatively less anxiety speaking to a native English speaker in class than outside of class in "the real world." There was also indication from the study that

learners from Confucian Heritage Cultures (CHC's), China, Korea, and Japan were more anxious learners than other ethnic groups. In addition, the results indicate that the most frequent source of anxiety was interacting with native speakers.

Willingness to communicate

The negative impact that language anxiety has on L2 language acquisition has been researched widely (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Horwitz, Horwitz, & Cope, 1986; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1991, 1994). However, studies in WTC in regards to L2 learning have been relatively scarce. Much initial research on this construct was conducted in L1 situations. Communication researchers initiated research on this topic, studying communication apprehension and its negative effects on L1 usage (Daly & McCroskey, 1984). Later, McCroskey and associates (McCroskey, 1992; McCroskey & Richmond, 1987, 1991) developed the term WTC and defined it through a series of components that effect communicative behavior; communication apprehension, introversion, reticence, and shyness. MacIntyre expanded upon this idea and developed a model that combined a greater perceived communicative competence and a lower level of language anxiety and later applied it to L2 communication. MacIntyre later developed another model (1994) that focused on the way perceived competence and anxiety affect WTC separately. However, that model is being challenged by Clement's model (Clement & Kruidenier, 1985), where competence and anxiety form a completely new construct, self-confidence in using the L2. Incorporating the elements of both of these models, self-confidence can be seen to lead to L2 WTC. In addition, incorporating integrative motivation from Gardner's (1985) socioeducational model, MacIntyre and Clement (1996) reported that integrative motivation had a positive effect on WTC in the L2.

In the Japanese context, Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide, and Shimizu (2004) have attempted to develop a model that is conducive to explaining Japanese WTC. Yashima reports that Japanese students tend to exhibit dual goals, some are most focused on immediate goals, such as tests, grades, and academic achievement, whereas others seem to consider the international-communication goal to be personally relevant. The researcher coined the term, *international posture* to refer to this latter continuum. Examples of strong international posture might be expressed through interest in foreign or international affairs, willingness to work overseas, among other things (Yashima, Zenuk-Nishide & Shimizu, 2004). For a group of 60 Japanese SA participants, they found that this international posture led to increases in WTC. Results in

the study also showed that frequency of communication correlated with satisfaction in interpersonal relationships during the program abroad.

Self-confidence

Beyond linguistic development often encountered from participation in SA programs, there are other affective benefits that may be realized. The research in this area has provided various, inconclusive, and somewhat counterintuitive results. Most studies dealing with self-confidence in a SA context have tended to concentrate more on general aspects of confidence, usually as a subset of personality development characteristics. Juhasz and Walker (1988) studied the effects of SA on students' self-esteem and self-efficacy. Results indicated that learners who did not participate in the SA program rated themselves higher on both ratings than those who participated in the SA program. Yachimowicz (1988) met similar results when the SA group remained stable on a self-efficacy measurement while the control group members exhibited ratings higher than in the pre-test. In another study, Burn, Carlson, Useem, and Yachimowicz (1990) detailed no significant differences between the SA group and the on-campus group in levels of self-confidence. These findings, although somewhat difficult to explain, may reveal that SA participants are more aware of their limits rating themselves somewhat lower on self-efficacy and self-esteem measurements than their control group counterparts who may, due to not participating in the SA, be less aware of their own limitations, prompting them to rate themselves higher.

On the contrary, Kuh and Kauffman (1985) reported results of positive gains in self-confidence in their SA group in comparison to a control group. These results supported traditional thinking that positive affective growth could be realized through participation in SA programs. However, substantial research on self-confidence in the context of SA is clearly lacking and beckons further research.

Integrative Motivation

The widespread idea of many researchers is that success in L2 studies is highly dependent on integrative motivation and the learner's attitude toward the target language group. There have been several studies done to support this idea. In 2001, Kimura, Nakata, and Okumura conducted a survey that revealed a strong correlation between L2 success and integrative motivation. Typical items that were included in the survey were: 1) Want to make American or British friends, 2) Long for American or

British culture, 3) To touch upon the culture of English-speaking countries (Kimura, Nakata, & Okumura, 2001).

In another study conducted on 320 Japanese nationals enrolled in the Intensive English Language Program at Temple University Japan in Tokyo, these ideas about the importance of integrative motivation were again evident. The results showed that "high and middle proficiency students appear to have less instrumental motivation on average than the low proficiency group (Brown, Robson, & Rosenkjar as cited in Dornyei & Schmidt, 2001: 391)."

However convincing these results may seem, there have also been some researchers who have disagreed with this hypothesis, especially in the scope of EFL in Asia. Clyde Warden and Hsiu Ju Lin (2000) provide insight into this difference in their study of Taiwanese university students studying EFL. They hypothesized that in Taiwan, a great deal of motivation on the part of the student was due to instrumental motivation. In support of this, Dornyei (1990) points out that foreign language "learners often have not had sufficient experience of the target language community to have attitudes for or against it (p. 49)," and therefore will not be motivated by integrating with that community to such a large extent as if they were studying and living in a second language setting. Other researchers have also found instrumental motivation to be a major factor in research conducted in the social contexts of the Phillipines, India, and Japan (Chihara & Oller, 1978; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Lukmani, 1972).

Applying the above information: Building a case for sending Japanese EFL students to study English in a non-English Speaking country

As SA programs have continued to surface in Japan, the cost to the student to participate in these programs has also continued to rise. In many cases, relatively inexpensive tuition, housing, food, and travel expenses in nearby Asian countries (i.e., Thailand and the Philippines), has allowed Japanese students to study English in a much cheaper way than they would have, if they had participated in a SA program in an English speaking country. This type of SA program would allow more Japanese students to participate, making it more accessible to more students.

In addition to the obvious possible positive financial benefits of a SA program in a non-English speaking country, there may also be affective benefits. Woodrow (2006) reported that the most frequent source of anxiety for graduate ESL students in Australia was interacting with native speakers. If SA participants were interacting

with fellow EFL learners, but fellow learners who were coming from a foreign culture (i.e., Thailand, the Philippines), creating an interpersonal dynamic where there was no common L1 to converse in, the motivation to speak in English to make oneself understood to the "foreign" interlocutor would be heightened, theoretically.

As SA students to a non-English speaking country experience less anxiety to speak inside and outside of class, there may be a stronger chance for students to build interpersonal relationships. Results from a study completed by (Yashima) showed that WTC correlated with satisfaction in interpersonal relationships during the program abroad. These stronger ties established with persons met during the SA program could lead to increased study in English and an overall desire to communicate on the part of the SA student.

By communicating in English inside and outside of the classroom, SA students to non-English speaking countries can become more involved with the local population. This involvement may also spur additional motivation to learn English. The construct, integrative motivation, need not be limited to associating solely with native English speakers. Whether the use of English allows a SA student to maintain an interpersonal relationship with an American or a Thai is irrelevant. Integrating in to the English speaking world, whether it be to relate to Thai speakers of English or American native English speakers is still the same construct and may exert similar motivational power over the SA student.

When considering the differences between sending EFL students to an English speaking country or a non-English speaking country, several questions arise concerning the amount of exposure to English that students may encounter outside of class. It is generally thought that those students studying in countries such as the United States of America, Canada, or Australia will have additional exposure to the language outside of the classroom. Whereas, students participating in a SA program to a non-English speaking country would be at a disadvantage to learn the language because they would be less exposed to English outside of the classroom. However, just how much exposure students, particularly Japanese students, open themselves up to outside of the classroom remains greatly under-researched. Due to the anxiety experienced from talking with native speakers, there is a possibility that students would be more willing to interact with people in English outside of the classroom if they were not talking to native English speakers.

Furthermore, when analyzing the dynamics of a SA classroom in a non-English

speaking country compared to one in an English speaking country, there may be fewer differences than one might think. For example, in a SA classroom in a non-English speaking country, there would typically be a native English speaker teaching the class and the cultural make-up of the students in the class would be heterogeneous. In reference to the Japanese example, Thai students would be paired with Japanese students requiring both Thai and Japanese students alike to use the L2 to communicate to one another. There would be an assumption that none of the Thai students could speak Japanese and none of the Japanese students could speak Thai. Although there may be a greater number of cultures represented in a typical SA classroom in London, New York, or Sydney, the SA classroom in a non-English speaking country would not be that different.

Recently, there has been a continuing trend for businesses in Japan to work more closely with other nations in Asia, i.e. trading, subcontracting, etc. If students from Japan were to participate in a SA program to the Philippines or Thailand, for example, Japanese students would be experiencing Thai or Filipino "English" first hand. This might initially require some negotiation on the part of the students to understand one another but eventually, Japanese students would become familiar with Thai or Filipino English speech patterns and be able to understand them more clearly, and vice versa. Japanese students who have practiced listening to only American teachers would most probably have trouble understanding Thai or Filipino English speakers. Chances are much higher that Japanese university students will be working in a business that interacts more closely with other Asian businesses than a business from one of the English-speaking countries of the world. Professionally-speaking, having the opportunity to experience Thai or Filipino "Englishes" and also to form networks with other Asian counterparts would provide an ideal opportunity for young Japanese college students.

Yashima (2000) indicated that English seems to represent something more vague and larger than Americans and British in the minds of young Japanese learners. For many learners, English symbolizes the world around Japan, something that connects them to foreign countries and foreigners, or "strangers" in Gudykunst and Kim's sense (1984), with whom they can communicate by using English. Although English tends to be associated more with Westerners than non-Westerners, it is increasingly perceived as a means to communicate

with Asian neighbors (Yashima, 2004: 124-125).

Method

This study will examine the significant affective changes for EFL participants after a 4-week, university-level SA program in Bangkok, Thailand. The factors that will be measured will be self-confidence, language anxiety, willingness to communicate, and integrative motivation. Due to the unique nature of this study (studying EFL in a non-English speaking country), prior empirical research directly related to the topic is limited. The current investigation will address the following questions:

1. Is a change exhibited in the participants' self-confidence after participating in a SA program to a non-English speaking country?
2. Is a change exhibited in the participants' willingness to communicate after participating in a SA program to a non-English speaking country?
3. Is a change exhibited in the participants' language anxiety after participating in a SA program to a non-English speaking country?
4. Is a change exhibited in the participants' integrative motivation after participating in a SA program to a non-English speaking country?
5. Was there a difference between levels of self-confidence, language anxiety, willingness to communicate, and integrative motivation, respectively, before the participants departed for the SA?

The study will be conducted using a mixed-methodology design consisting of both qualitative and quantitative data collection practices. The rationale behind this decision stems from the complexity of researching affective factors. Attempting triangulation between course facilitators (i.e., staff, instructors), SA participants, the primary researcher in this study, and Thai national classmates will help to ensure the gathering of more valid and reliable data from the study. Quantitative data obtained from questionnaires and tests will provide a confirmation to the qualitative data (i.e., interviews, observations, etc.) and vice versa.

Conclusion

As EFL education progresses in Japan, common theories have sometimes been abandoned for more advanced hypotheses. Certainly, the prospect of sending EFL students to a non-English speaking country to study English is a foreign concept. Nonetheless, this does not signal a weakness in the hypotheses. Future research,

which the author hopes to undertake, will provide more answers to the actual benefits/ disadvantages of this type of SA program on student affective development. In this paper, the author has attempted to provide the theoretical groundwork for such a study. By synthesizing research data from four main constructs, integrative motivation, self-confidence, willingness to communicate, and language anxiety, the author has tried to form a connection between a SA program to a non-English speaking country and its possible influence on student affect.

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