

Learning to Participate in On-the-Street Interviews and Company Visits on a Short-Term Study Abroad Program

Nathaniel Finn

World Language Center Soka University

Keywords: short-term study abroad

Abstract

This study has two purposes. First, it examines how Japanese university students perceived opportunities for learning in a short-term study tour of two U.S. cities. Second, it investigates the students' reflections on how those opportunities were supported through participation in pre-departure study sessions. Research on study abroad (SA) has investigated the potential benefits of students immersing themselves in new contexts with various occasions for the use of a second language (L2). One focus of research interest has been on learning to participate in commonly available activities at the SA site including having meals with host families (e.g., DuFon, 2006), engaging in service encounters (e.g., Shively, 2011), and attending academic courses (e.g., Yang, 2010). Little work has been done on SA activities that grow out of university programs using an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) framework. Thus, this study examines the learning opportunities from two

relatively underexplored activities, on-the-street interviews and company visits, from an intensive English program within a university's economics department. Furthermore, research on SA has justifiably focused most of its attention on the experiences of students in the host community while little work has been done to understand the role of preparatory sessions occurring before departure. To address this issue, the reflections of students on the pre-departure study sessions after engaging in the two focal activities at the SA site are examined.

Introduction

Study abroad can be a formative experience for learners of a second language (L2), which is reflected in the attention it has received from researchers in the field of second language acquisition (e.g., DuFon & Churchill, 2006). One line of qualitative SA research has looked at the potential learning opportunities from sustained interactions in valued activities. Through interacting with homestay

members at mealtime, students gain many forms of learning such as the ability to participate in narrative routines (Greer, 2019), knowledge of moral stances toward food (Kinginger et al., 2014), and the opportunity to co-construct folk beliefs (Cook, 2006). Students studying in academic contexts at the host site can learn academic discourse features such as responsiveness to audience cues (Yang, 2010) in oral presentations, the ability to draw from experience to make arguments in group discussions (Ho, 2011), and the ability to cite references appropriately in student-advisor writing conferences (Eriksson & Mäkitalo, 2013). Through service encounters with shop staff (Shively, 2011) and public transportation drivers (Hassall, 2013), students gain pragmatic knowledge of how to interact by following the customs of the host community. What is less known is how SA activities are constructed as extensions of home academic contexts as in the case of ESP programs that include gaining international experience as a part of the curriculum. Many students studying in ESP programs and participating in SA do so to more effectively participate in a specific domain or discipline, yet little is known about the opportunities for learning through SA activities that address the needs of such students. Furthermore, the possibility of a lack of fit between the types of preparation offered for SA and the specific types of L2 experiences the students encounter in the host community has been identified as an area of concern in SA programs (Goldoni, 2013). Relatively little work to date has looked at the role of pre-departure study sessions in supporting the learning opportunities of students in SA programs. There have been calls to better understand how students pre-

pare before leaving their home country (Goldoni, 2015) and how students process their experiences after they return (Lee & Kinginger, 2018).

This study focuses on learning opportunities in two SA activities, on-the-street interviews and company visits, from the perspective of 13 out of 25 students who participated in a short-term study tour of two U.S. cities. In addition, the study examines the students' perceptions on how three all-day pre-departure study sessions prepared them to engage in the two focal activities. From these analyses, the study aims to add to the literature on learning opportunities in SA programs by exploring activities designed for students in an ESP program.

Literature Review

Study abroad is viewed as having major benefits for language learners. For many, it is the first opportunity to be immersed in a new context with frequent and meaningful opportunities for L2 use. One interesting theme in study abroad research is the potential for learning through repeated participation in valued activities in the host community. Young (2011) refers to these activities as discursive practices and defines them as "recurring episodes that are of social and cultural significance to a community of speakers" (p. 427). Researchers studying recurring activities in SA contexts often note how language learning occurs simultaneously with other forms of learning. As learners participate in interactional routines around host family meals (DuFon, 2006; Greer, 2019; Kinginger et al., 2014), service encounters (Hassall, 2013; Shively, 2011), and conversations with

peers (Diao, 2014; Dings, 2014), they learn to participate more skillfully by using linguistic resources which are often tied to the culture, ideologies, identities, and social knowledge of the host community. In the case of service encounters, researchers have found that more skillful participation in the procurement of services involves a deepening of pragmatic understanding of when to display intimacy and distance that differs from the L2 learners' home context (Hassall, 2013; Shively, 2011). SA research has also looked at how strategies might facilitate pragmatic knowledge of how to do leave-takings (Hassall, 2006) as well as requests and apologies (Cohen & Shively, 2007). L2 learners have opportunities to encounter linguistic features that are not often systematically treated by textbooks. For instance, learners staying with host families have found that native speakers do not always consistently stay in a polite or casual register at the dinner table. Instead, they switch between the two to achieve their communicative purposes (Cook, 2008). L2 learners interacting with peers from the host community in dormitories have developed the ability to express their identities using linguistic resources that vary from region to region within the host country (Diao, 2014). Researchers have also found that L2 learners vary in the way they seek out or avoid opportunities to engage in activities with members of the host community (Du, 2013; Kinginger, 2008). Much of the focus to date has been on activities that are widely accessible through SA, leaving learning activities for specific purposes, such as SA activities within ESP programs, relatively unexplored.

There has been a recent trend in SA research to expand the focus of analysis beyond

what occurs during the students' time spent abroad (Allen, 2010; Campbell, 2015; Lee & Kinginger, 2018). Lee and Kinginger (2018) took an interesting approach to this area by examining the use of narratives by Kevin, an undergraduate student studying Chinese, as he returns from a trip to China and is reintegrated into his home university language curriculum in the U.S. Initially highly motivated by the opportunity to continue learning a language he had positive experiences with in the host community, Kevin grows increasingly disillusioned with his language studies as he comes to believe that the Chinese course he is enrolled in does not meaningfully add to the learning that took place abroad. In the early stages of the course, his Chinese instructor would call on Kevin to share his stories of SA in China with the class as she found the narratives to be vivid in their description of life in the country. Over time, the instructor perceived that Kevin was relying too heavily on these narratives instead of taking the initiative to engage in new learning opportunities in his current course. While Lee and Kinginger's study points to the potential benefits of examining antecedent learning experiences in SA contexts on language learning afterward, it is important to consider how the reverse might also be true. Antecedent experiences leading up to SA might also play an important role in shaping SA experiences. Furthermore, analyzing student narratives on their learning opportunities before going abroad and during the tour might lead to important insights into the role of pre-departure preparatory sessions in facilitating beneficial SA experiences.

Research on engagement with SA-related activities has provided important findings on

the opportunities for learning through SA. However, much of this research has focused on general activities associated with SA experiences with little attention paid to the specific purposes of language learners such as those of students who belong to programs that promote ESP. Additionally, more research needs to be done on the role of preparatory activities for SA in the hopes of identifying ways of supporting the educational benefits of SA that include language development and other forms of learning. Thus, this study seeks to investigate two questions:

- (1) What were the students' perceptions of learning opportunities from participating in on-the-street interviews and company visits?
- (2) What were the students' perceptions of how the learning opportunities were supported through participation in pre-departure preparatory sessions?

Method

Data Collection and Context

The primary source of data for this study comes from semi-structured interviews with 13 students which occurred shortly after they returned from a 12-day tour of two major U.S. cities. Additional sources of data include field observations and audiovisual recordings of three all-day pre-departure preparatory sessions, collection of artifacts from the sessions, and interviews with the two coordinators of the study abroad program and two senior students who gave a talk during the sessions on how to prepare for the tour. The research site is a university in eastern Japan that participates in the Top Global University Project, a Japanese government initiative that commits

10 years of financial support to universities that promote the internationalization of Japan's education system (MEXT, n.d.). The SA program is part of an elective two-year intensive English program in the Faculty of Economics which prepares students for undergraduate and graduate study abroad and future employment in international contexts. Major activities in the program include academic research, writing, and presentations on topics dealing with economics.

The short-term SA tour to an English-speaking country occurred during the break between the end of one academic year and the start of the next. The study tour was one component of the intensive English program designed to provide students with international experience. It also served to preview the types of research activities the students would do in the second year of the program. Intensive pre-departure study sessions were a major component of the program. A total of six study sessions were held with activities designed to prepare the students to have a successful study tour. The first three 90-minute study sessions were preliminary. The students received orientation information, formed research-project groups, and chose their research topic. Study Sessions 4-6 involved day-long intensive preparation for the research project and the study tour. During the study sessions, the students learned how to give an academic presentation and how to write an academic research paper. They worked together in their groups to present information about a Japanese company conducting business in a foreign market or a foreign company conducting business in Japan. On the final study session day, the groups presented the findings of their research to their classmates

and the coordinators of the program. Within a month of returning to Japan after the study abroad tour, they completed a group research paper on the same topic.

Another major function of the pre-departure study sessions was to prepare the students to participate in on-the-street interviews and company visits. For the on-the-street interviews, students were assigned to interview a minimum of 30 people. The purpose of the project was to create opportunities for the students to speak with and learn from people living in or visiting California. The specific focus of the interviews was at the discretion of the students. Through interviewing 30 people, students were encouraged to learn about the perspectives of the interviewees. The project was also designed to be an opportunity for the students to meaningfully use their L2. During the pre-departure sessions, students received instruction on how to conduct the interviews, wrote sample questions, and role-played the interviews amongst themselves. They were encouraged to conduct some of the interviews with people they would meet during tours of the city. For instance, students conducted interviews with people at airports, at tourist sites such as amusement parks, and while taking rides in taxis. The students also met with members of an association affiliated with the home university who had moved to the U.S. for employment. The students also visited an affiliated university in the U.S. where they could speak to Japanese students attending university abroad. Thus, they had opportunities to speak with Japanese people who were working or studying abroad. In addition to the support provided by the pre-departure training, students met for evening on-site study sessions where

they could discuss how their interviews went under the supervision of the head coordinator. Finally, the students were asked to keep a daily travel diary about their reflections on the things they were learning.

Company visits were another major component of the study tour. In the company visits, students toured facilities and listened to talks by company representatives. Many of the companies fit the criteria of the students' research assignment as the companies did business in a foreign market. For example, one company the students visited at the time of the study was a health food maker from Japan. Thus, having the students research companies that had entered foreign markets was designed to prepare the students for visits with such companies. Participation in the pre-departure study sessions doubled as training for the company visits. In another study at the same research site (Finn, 2021), the head coordinator, Ken (all names are pseudonyms), was found to implicitly and explicitly construct his talks with the students as training for accountable audience participation. For instance, silence in response to being asked a question by a presenter was constructed as inappropriate through Ken's use of resources such as gaze, gestures, and spoken warnings on the consequences that would come from lack of participation.

Participants

All the participants of the study tour, including two coordinators, 25 students going on the tour, and two senior students who gave a talk in the study sessions, gave their informed consent to participate in the research with varying levels of participation. The two coordinators conducted the study sessions through close collaboration. They were both

administrators of the intensive English program in the Faculty of Economics out of which the study tour was organized. Ken, the head coordinator, led the pre-departure study sessions and accompanied the students on the tour. Lee, the assistant coordinator, played an active role in the organization and administration of the tour. Out of the 25 students, 13 agreed to participate in the interviews that serve as the primary source of data for this research. The 13 students (eight female participants, five male participants) were all economics majors who had just completed their first year of university study at the time of the research. Attempts were made to get a variety of participants based on gender and English proficiency.

Data Analysis

Interview transcriptions were inductively and recursively analyzed to determine the emergent themes of the participants regarding the learning opportunities from their participation in the study tour program. In line-by-line coding, Saldaña's (2012) descriptions of *in vivo*, process, and value coding were drawn upon. *In vivo* coding involved identifying key language the participants themselves used in describing their experiences. Through process coding, moments where the participants' perceptions changed due to participation in on-the-street interviews and company visits were identified. Value coding was used to determine the values, beliefs, and attitudes of the participants as they took part in the two focal activities and the pre-departure study sessions. Emerging codes and themes were compared between participants.

Conceptual Framework

This research is informed by the sociocultural concepts of *apprenticeship*, *guided par-*

ticipation, and *participatory appropriation* (Rogoff, 1995, 2003). From Rogoff's perspective (2003), learning is "a process of people's changing participation in sociocultural activities of their communities" (p. 52). Apprenticeship refers to how communities and institutions shape aspects of an activity. The study tour program can be understood from this vantage by looking at how coordinators and administrators set the purposes, methods, and resources of the program. Guided participation refers to how novices perform activities with more competent members of a community, thereby increasing their ability to act competently over time. At this level, one can look at the interactions between the coordinators of the study tour, the senior students, and the people the students meet in the host community for the ways these more competent members facilitate the students' participation in the activities. Finally, participatory appropriation focuses on how the novices change over time through their participation in the activities. From this perspective, one can look at the students' trajectories of participation over the course of the SA program from preparation for the activities in the study sessions to performance in the activities at the SA site. While apprenticeship and guided participation inform the background understanding of the research site, the emphasis of the analysis in this paper is on participatory appropriation as the research targeted students' perceptions of the learning opportunities afforded by the study tour.

Findings and Discussion

Learning Opportunities in Approaching People for On-The-Street Interviews

Many students found the interview assignment to be challenging but worthwhile. Several students remarked that they felt it was one of the first opportunities for them to hear the real opinions of native speakers of English and that they regarded the opportunity to hear such opinions as valuable. Their reflections on the learning opportunities from doing the interviews can be divided into learning how to approach people for an interview and learning from conducting the interview itself.

The act of approaching someone in a different country for an interview in their L2 proved to be challenging for the students to accomplish. Many of the students noted a change in their approach, often in response to difficulties faced in interviews early on. Their stories expressed the theme of overcoming hurdles to communication. Haru told a story that exemplified the difficulty the students faced. He noted:

My first person who I asked the question is not good for me because I tried to speak. ... I thought she is very kind, and I try to interview but I ask a question and then she closes her eyes and her face looked like angry and I said I'm very sorry, but she didn't respond so I was shocked and ... I didn't want to try the interview project after this experience, but I tried the next person. Her hair is pink but she's very kind and it is easy to speak English and I can learn there are many people have a different viewpoint.

In processing the two cases, Haru reflected on how he had been taught that it was important to be able to try to speak with people even if they come from different backgrounds especially when considering employment in international contexts. Haru considered his English ability to be higher than many of his tour mates, so he was surprised to see that some of them more easily communicated with the people they met. Through his struggles in approaching people for interviews, he could learn the value of developing communication skills, which he viewed as being necessary in the future when working for a company and responding to customer needs. Several of Haru's tour mates also commented on having a realization that they needed stronger communication skills. Some of them made a contrast between the academic English they had studied for a year in the intensive English program and the type of communication skills they would need to talk with people from other countries.

Avoiding or failing to find opportunities for L2 interaction is a common theme in SA research (Diao, 2014; Du, 2013). Haru's experience captures the idea of persisting in the face of failure. Interestingly, this idea resonates with one of the fundamental competencies that has been identified as being crucial in the development of global human resources according to Japan's ministry of education, "the ability to take a step forward and try patiently even after failure" (Yonezawa, 2014, p. 38). Several students commented on the fear they felt when beginning to conduct the interviews. Lee, the assistant coordinator, had asked the students of past study tours why they were so scared. He saw the fear as resulting from being denied opportunities to fail

and learn from their failures growing up. Yuji expressed a similar sentiment when he said the following:

I could not listen all and in the situation, I want to say something but I could not say something. I cannot find the words to explain these things that I want to say. This experience changed me, and I realized that I don't have enough level of speaking English for living in America. So maybe after that experience, I can study harder... Experiencing these practical situations, it is very important to go to America, to go to the real America. Not on TV or not on YouTube. Feel and experience failure is very important for you. Make a lot of failure in [the study tour]. I want to say this.

One of the values of repeated engagement with an activity such as the interview project and the company visits is that students can learn from their early experiences and improve their performance in later encounters.

In addition to learning to overcome their fear of approaching people for interviews, the students also learned to be strategic in the way that they approached people. Lala and Yuji noted that they struggled early in their interviews but learned how to be more successful through asking for advice and watching their more successful peers. Lala noticed that a pair of her tour mates were having success by approaching people for advice related to their surroundings. If they were in a bookstore, for instance, they asked about popular books. Fitting the purpose of the interview to the setting led to success. Yuji tagged along with a more successful peer, Kai, and gained confidence from doing the interviews with him. In some cases, their requests for an in-

terview were not granted. Yuji appreciated the way that Kai would try again soon after being declined. Many students realized that certain settings were conducive to conducting interviews. Students used taxis or the ride-hailing service Uber while traveling around in their free time. They found the drivers were eager to answer the students' questions and would ask some of their own. Eri noted that the duration of the drive offered many opportunities to ask questions. Similar to Lala's strategic formulation of questions based on circumstances, Eri used the time spent being driven around to learn as much as possible about the cities' attractions by asking the driver for recommendations.

The finding that students learned that taxi and Uber drivers were willing to answer the students' questions adds to the SA literature on learning from service encounters (Hassall, 2013; Shively, 2011). In Shively's (2011) study of Spanish L2 learners' development in pragmatic understanding through service procurement routines in shops in Spain, the students learned to avoid engaging in personal talk through their interactions with shop staff as the staff showed a preference for sticking to the transactional nature of the interaction. In contrast to that finding, the students in this study found their drivers to be quite eager to engage in personal talk. Eiji, Kanta, Yuka, Eri, and Kai mentioned Uber as a positive experience when asked about the memorable events from the study tour. While privacy concerns would preclude collecting the kind of interactional data that Shively did in public spaces, it is interesting to consider the kinds of interactional routines students learned to participate in through their conversations with drivers. In Hassall's (2013) study, just

being in the presence of drivers and other passengers from the local community led to opportunities to learn widely used terms of address that were not covered in textbooks. The present study points to rides in taxis or ride-hailing services as sites of sustained interaction due to the characteristics of the service. From the accounts of the students, the drivers were eager participants in the conversations. In such a situation, the need for an explicit approach to conducting an interview is likely reduced. In contrast to other transportation workers and shop staff, taxi and Uber drivers can attend to their customers on a personalized basis. Similarly, in Du's (2013) study of fluency development in SA in China, one participant noted that Chinese taxi drivers were eager conversationalists on her shopping trips around the city.

Learning Opportunities in Conducting On-The-Street Interviews

In discussing the learning opportunities from conducting the interviews, the students interestingly focused on their ability to follow up on interviewee responses. Once students could successfully approach someone for an interview and start asking questions, they encountered two types of problems. First, they struggled to catch what the person said and come up with a meaningful follow-up. Second, the person they interviewed would sometimes initiate their own line of questioning which the students struggled to respond to. Both issues may reflect aspects of how the task was constructed and prepared for as well as the proficiency level of the students.

Difficulty in following up on responses from interviewees was a common theme in the students' responses. Eri found that not following up on her answers led to short interviews that

made her feel the need to improve her communication skills. Aoi mentioned that she could talk with many people as she waited for taxis or buses, but she found it difficult to formulate her follow-up responses. To compensate, she used gestures and head nods to show her engagement with the interviewees. Kai expressed regret that he was not able to speak more about the interviewee's response. He remarked that his lack of listening ability prevented him from successfully acknowledging the interviewee's response. Kai's comments suggest that he felt a responsibility to develop the topic he himself had introduced. The interviewee had taken the time to respond to the question, so Kai felt he should be able to follow up more to show his appreciation. Eiji reflected that he struggled to match the casual register of the people he spoke with. Instead of struggling to accurately catch what the interviewee said, Eiji found that his word choices led to misunderstandings on the part of the interviewee. Eiji expressed reservations about learning to speak more casually, noting "I thought I have to learn more casual English, but I'm afraid ... I'll lose my academic English."

The students' frustration at not being able to meaningfully follow up on the responses of people they met points to issues with interactional routines in interview formats. A fundamental aspect of accountable behavior in conversation is that participants tie their responses meaningfully to what has been said prior (Maynard, 1980). A study on a pedagogical task involving L2 students and native speakers found that the students tended to ask series of questions that did not build on each other (Mori, 2002). In the present study, the issue seems to reflect the difficulty stu-

dents faced in understanding the interviewee's talk while also coming up with a meaningful response to that talk. The frustration they expressed toward their performance suggests they were aware of not being responsive to the interviewee. The students wanted to be able to fluidly build on the message of their interlocutors but could not do so in the moment. Many students commented on the need to focus more on communication skills in their English studies. Thus, the interviews acted as an opportunity to notice a gap in their ability.

In addition to struggling to follow up on interviewee responses, the students also struggled when the interviewee wanted to ask them questions. While the students valued the opportunity to "know the real opinion from the native people," as Yuka put it, the people they met also wanted to learn about Japan through talking with the students. Yuka described a two-way flow of information. She could learn about the people in America, and she could teach them about Japanese culture. However, Kai and Kanta struggled to talk about Japanese culture when asked. Kai was surprised to find that one of the interviewees knew about Japanese celebrities that he had not heard of. One of the Uber drivers asked Kanta to explain relations between Japan and Russia, and Kanta was disappointed that he could not answer. He decided that he wanted to learn more about Japan so that he could answer people's questions, especially as many international visitors were expected to visit during the Tokyo Olympics.

The students' descriptions of their interviews suggest that some of them had a changing stance toward the role of the interview.

The students understandably perceived its function to be to collect information from others. While Yuka felt appreciative and ready for the chance for a reciprocal sharing of information, Kai and Kanta discovered the value of being able to communicate interesting information about Japan. Co-construction of cultural beliefs (Cook, 2006) and positioning of L2 learners as ignorant about cultural matters (Iino, 2006) has been a theme of SA research into homestay interactions at the dinner table. Here, interaction with interviewees spurred Kai and Kanta to understand that they were representatives of Japan. They realized they could add value to intercultural conversations by being ready to speak about their culture.

Learning Opportunities from Participating in Company Visits

The students' experience of visiting five companies in the U.S. was a rich point, Agar's (1986) expression for an encounter that is beyond one's cultural or linguistic expectations. The students witnessed company cultures that varied greatly from their conceptions. All 13 students mentioned the visits when asked to recount memorable events from the tour. The learning opportunities that the students discussed can be divided into two themes: learning from participation in the talks and learning from the content of the talks.

Many students discussed the difficulties of participating in company visits. The students struggled to listen and understand the contents of the talk well enough to participate in the question-and-answer session after the talk. Yuka reflected on the challenge of asking the company representatives a question, a sentiment shared by many other participants. For Yuka, part of the challenge came from the

different emphases that the speakers had in giving their presentations. Some company speakers focused on the history of the company. Others focused on general information or a major problem the company had faced. Instead of asking a general question about the company, Yuka wanted to ask about something the speaker said in the talk, which proved challenging when she could not anticipate the topic of the talk beforehand. To address this problem, Yuka researched each company before the visit. Yuka noted:

Preparing was important. Knowing some basic information of the company so that I could listen to the presentation easily and maybe I could have some time to think about the question for the company, but I prepared some questions to ask before I went to visit the company.

Like Yuka, Kaho struggled to ask a question in the first company visit. She did not enjoy the visit as a result. From this disappointing experience, she could learn the value of expressing her opinion. She remarked that when she did not speak during the Q&A session it was “meaningless for me and the company.” Kaho found the company visits that followed to be difficult, but she was able to ask questions. She noted, “I could learn the importance of having my opinion and the importance of actively participating in discussion.” Lee pointed out that in preparing students who have never been abroad before, nothing can compare with the actual experience, noting:

When they actually visit companies and experience the interactions and fail, it becomes real to them. ... Having opportunities to fail and figure out what needs to be done to do better for the next opportu-

nity facilitate learning more than always doing something perfectly.

Recognizing the value of doing research before for the company visits to ask better questions and planning on-the-street interviews based on the surroundings points to the importance of being able to develop communicative strategies as needed. As in Hassall’s (2006) case study on leave-takings, the students’ development of strategies was an iterative process facilitated by repeated opportunities to engage in the same activity and to reflect on their performance. One aspect of this study that distinguishes it from other studies was the way that the company visits were constructed as being high stakes within the SA program. In the pre-departure study sessions, Ken and the two senior students repeatedly emphasized the value of the opportunity to meet company representatives and the responsibility the students had to take the opportunity seriously. The students were trained to understand that they needed to be accountable to speakers who had generously volunteered their time to meet the students. Furthermore, they were made to understand that failure to actively participate might jeopardize future visits to the company as companies might not be willing to invite the program back. Thus, taking the initiative to speak took on heightened value, which may have motivated the development of communication strategies. As Lee noted above, training the students has its limits. Through meeting the challenges of the actual visits, as illustrated by Kaho’s case, students came to understand the need to be active participants.

Learning Opportunities in the Messages from the Company Visits

The company talks conveyed messages that

the students found to be inspiring and useful in considering their goals in university and their future career. Many students identified a theme that came across in many of the talks, the idea of having a core, that the students found to be particularly valuable. The company representatives connected moments of failure to incidents when their companies moved away from their core and moments of success were understood as illustrations of sticking to the core. In the case of a famous shoe company, the representative noted how the business struggled when trying to make shoes for purposes outside its core market. A representative from a precision tools company explained how recognition that their core value came from cutting, polishing, and grinding allowed them to capitalize on new opportunities in the production of silicon chips.

The students were intrigued by the idea of having a core, and some of them applied it to their own life. Kanta saw having a strong core as a key attribute when entering the international market. Eiji saw gaining international experience as his core goal and saw his participation in the study tour as part of that goal. Mina said that learning about the companies' core had inspired her to try to identify what her core was. In a similar comment, Eri noted that one of the speakers explicitly directed the audience to consider what their "one important thing" was. Eri found it difficult to consider what that one thing would be for her. Lala applied the idea of having a core to her role as a leader of a university circle dedicated to promoting LGBT human rights. She said that there were disagreements at times among the members about what actions to take. Lala stated:

The core is spreading the idea of LGBT.

In Japan, the idea of LGBT is very new, so ... we can decrease the misunderstanding in this university ... if everyone in my circle understands the core. We can be successful and continue.

Yuji noted that the president of the precision tools company spoke to them after the main talk about his approach to organizing the company. Yuji found the president's system for motivating high achievement among the workers to be "really unique ..., a very efficient way to manage a company well ..., and a new perspective for [him]."

The value students saw in having a core points to how learning opportunities are shaped by the context-specific features of SA activities. Recent research on SA has tried to expand the typology of different learning opportunities from engaging with people for specific purposes in different contexts (Duff, 2019). The students' learning about the company practice of promoting core values (Johnson et al., 2009) became a valued piece of knowledge to understand more about work cultures in international contexts and about themselves. Many students noted how they could begin to imagine what it would be like to work abroad through the experience of visiting the company. Yuka and Kaho valued the sense of freedom and ease in the company cultures. Lala was struck by overhearing workers speaking Japanese, English, and Spanish in the same company. The company visits were an important learning opportunity for shaping the students' understanding of what it means to work internationally.

Learning from the Predeparture Study Sessions

A distinctive feature of the short-term study tour was that it involved intensive pre-

departure preparation for the interview project and the company visits. In addition, the students frequently commented that the pre-departure study sessions gave them a chance to bond with their tour mates through working on their group research projects and practicing for a song and dance performance to be conducted in front of students at an affiliated university in the host country. They saw this bonding process as an important element of the success of the tour. Regarding the interview project and the company visits, the students' comments suggest that they felt adequately trained for participation in the company visits. Some comments suggest they did not feel prepared for the communicative challenges of the interview project.

Through asking people questions for the interview project, many students realized that they needed to work on their communication skills. They did not state that they felt underprepared. Rather, doing the interview project made them realize the difference between academic English, which was emphasized in the intensive English program, and conversational English, which was needed to successfully speak with the people they met. For instance, Eri saw a distinction between the type of communication practice she received in preparing her presentation and the type of communication practice she needed to successfully interact with interviewees. She noted that senior students had recommended they buy a book of communication phrases to prepare them. Eri recommended that future study sessions include discussion of the difference between presentation skills and communication skills. As mentioned earlier, Eiji also came to realize the difference between the type of English he had been studying for a

year and the type of English he would need to better communicate with people in English in international contexts.

Many students saw a direct connection between the company research project and the company visits on the study tour. Yuka and Yuji thought that it was useful to practice asking questions during the presentations. One group of students chose to research a company they would visit on the SA tour, a Japan-based company famous for its health-oriented beverages. Those students regarded the pre-departure study sessions and the on-site activities as strongly connected. For instance, Kanta researched how the company relied on a female workforce of delivery drivers to distribute the company's products in Asia and South America. He was surprised to learn from the company representative's talk that such a system of delivery was not employed in the U.S. and the reasons why. A theme of the research projects was how companies needed to adapt when entering foreign markets. Kanta could learn valuable information about this theme by researching the company during the study sessions and hearing from a company representative at the host site. Similarly, Lala became interested in the strategies the company used to enter foreign markets. She had difficulty finding such information through internet searches. During the company visit, she could ask the representative to explain one of the strategies. Like Yuka and Yuji's opinions, Lala found that it was useful to practice asking questions during the oral presentations of the study sessions. She said that "usually Japanese students rarely ask questions, especially in English." Lala noted that Ken's directive that all students must ask at least two questions

during the oral presentations helped force the students to “really focus on listening to the presentations,” which proved to be useful practice in the company visits.

Little research to date has focused on the connection between pre-departure preparatory activities and the activities conducted at the SA site. A connection can be seen between the students’ reflections on the study sessions and the findings from Lee and Kinginger (2018) that suggest educational institutions could benefit from designing SA programs that are integrated with regular coursework. Students saw the opportunities to speak with people and visit companies as building on the studies they completed in the intensive English program. Integrating coursework and SA activities gave students a sense of the possibilities opened up to them for their future careers. Kaho noted:

I think that my juniors should go on the study tour because, through the study tour, I can extend my view. For example, before visiting America, I don’t want to work in a foreign country. I wanted to work in Japan. But after visiting company, I wanted to work in a foreign country. I want to work like [a famous skateboard shoe company] or [a precision tools company]. Those companies are freedom and comfortable working for me.

Kaho’s experiences on the study tour put her on a pathway to understanding what it means to work in an international context.

Conclusion

This study examined opportunities for learning in SA programs for students in ESP programs. Student perspectives on on-the-

street interviews, company visits, and pre-departure study sessions suggested that repeated encounters with valued activities afforded the students opportunities to realize gaps in their performance that spurred their awareness of the need to be active communicators while in university and in their future careers.

The findings suggest three practical applications when planning and implementing a short-term study tour. First, pre-departure study sessions can be valuable in giving students a framework for understanding their experiences in the host community. Nothing compares to actual experience at the host site, but training for on-site activities can help students process the insights they gain. Second, repeatedly engaging in a valued interactional routine gives students opportunities to develop strategies for overcoming past failures (as in Hassall, 2006). Lastly, it can be valuable to integrate SA activities into the larger curriculum of ESP programs. For instance, the students who researched a company they would visit on the study tour expressed an appreciation for their growing understanding of the company’s economic situation that began in the pre-departure study sessions and took on deeper meaning in the visit to the company. The study tour became an opportunity to witness firsthand the issues they learned about in their economics classes. In integrating SA into the broader curriculum, administrators can offer activities at the SA site that build on the preceding coursework and preview subsequent curricular goals. It is hoped that these findings can be of service in the administration and organization of short-term study tours.

References

- Agar, M. H. (1986). *Speaking of ethnography*. Sage.
- Allen, H. W. (2010). Language-learning motivation during short-term study abroad: An activity theory perspective. *Foreign Language Annals*, 43, 27-49. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1944-9720.2010.01058.x>
- Campbell, R. (2015). Interaction and social networks with target language speakers during study abroad and beyond: The experiences of learners of Japanese [Unpublished doctoral dissertation]. Monash University.
- Cohen, A. D. & Shively, R. L. (2007). Acquisition of requests and apologies in Spanish and French: Impact of study abroad and strategy-building intervention. *Modern Language Journal*, 91(2), 189-212. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2007.00540.x>
- Cook, H. M. (2006). Joint construction of folk beliefs by JFL learners and Japanese host families. In M. A. DuFon & E. F. J. Churchill (Eds.), *Language learners in study abroad contexts* (pp. 120-150). Multilingual Matters.
- Cook, H. M. (2008). *Socializing identities through speech style: Learners of Japanese as a foreign language*. Multilingual Matters.
- Diao, W. (2014). Peer socialization into gendered L2 Mandarin practices in a study abroad context: Talk in the dorm. *Applied Linguistics*, 37(5), 599-620. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amu053>
- Dings, A. (2014). Interactional competence and the development of alignment activity. *Modern Language Journal*, 98(3), 742-756. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2014.12120.x>
- Du, H. (2013). The development of Chinese fluency during study abroad in China. *Modern Language Journal*, 97(1), 131-143. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2013.01434.x>
- Duff, P. A. (2019). Social dimensions and processes in second language acquisition: Multilingual socialization in transnational contexts. *Modern Language Journal*, 103(S1), 6-22. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12534>
- DuFon, M. A. (2006). The socialization of taste during study abroad in Indonesia. In M. A. DuFon & E. Churchill (Eds.), *Language learners in study abroad contexts* (pp. 91-119). Multilingual Matters.
- DuFon, M. A., & Churchill, E. F. J. (Eds.). (2006). *Language learners in study abroad contexts*. Multilingual Matters.
- Eriksson, A. M., & Mäkitalo, Å. (2013). Referencing as practice: Learning to write and reason with other people's texts in environmental engineering education. *Learning, Culture and Social Interaction*, 2(3), 171-183. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lcsi.2013.05.002>
- Finn, N. (2021). *Socialization into affective stance-taking practices in preparatory sessions for a short-term study abroad tour* [Manuscript in preparation]. Graduate College of Education, Temple University, Japan Campus.
- Goldoni, F. (2013). Students' immersion experiences in study abroad. *Foreign Language Annals*, 46(3), 359-376. <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12047>
- Goldoni, F. (2015). Preparing students for studying abroad. *Journal of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning*, 15(4), 1-20. <https://doi.org/10.14434/josotl.v15i4.13640>
- Greer, T. (2019). Initiating and delivering news of the day: Interactional competence

- as joint-development. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 146, 150-164. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2018.08.019>
- Hassall, T. (2006). Learning to take leave in social conversations: A diary study. In M. A. DuFon & E. F. J. Churchill (Eds.), *Language learners in study abroad contexts* (pp. 31-58). Multilingual Matters.
- Hassall, T. (2013). Pragmatic development during short-term study abroad: The case of address terms in Indonesian. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 55, 1-17. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2013.05.003>
- Ho, M. C. (2011). Academic discourse socialization through small-group discussions. *System*, 39(4), 437-450. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2020.102311>
- Iino, M. (2006). Norms of interaction in a Japanese homestay setting: Toward a two-way flow of linguistic and cultural resources. In M. A. DuFon & E. Churchill (Eds.), *Language learners in study abroad contexts* (pp. 151-173). Multilingual Matters.
- Johnson, G., Scholes, K., & Whittington, R. (2009). *Exploring corporate strategy: Text & cases*. Pearson Education.
- Kinginger, C. (2008). Language learning in study abroad: Case studies of Americans in France. *Modern Language Journal*, 92(S1), 1-124. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.2008.00821.x>
- Kinginger, C., Lee, S. H., Wu, Q., & Tan, D. (2014). Contextualized language practices as sites for learning: Mealtimes talk in short-term Chinese homestays. *Applied Linguistics*, 37(5), 716-740. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amu061>
- Lee, S. H., & Kinginger, C. (2018). Narrative remembering of intercultural encounters: A case study of language program reintegration after study abroad. *Modern Language Journal*, 102(3), 578-593. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12505>
- Maynard, D. W. (1980). Placement of topic changes in conversation. *Semiotica*, 30(3-4), 263-290. <https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.1980.30.3-4.263>
- Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT). (n.d.). Top global university project. <https://tgu.mext.go.jp/en/about/index.html>
- Mori, J. (2002). Task design, plan, and development of talk - in - interaction: An analysis of a small group activity in a Japanese language classroom. *Applied Linguistics*, 23(3), 323-347. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/23.3.323>
- Rogoff, B. (1995). Observing sociocultural activity on three planes: Participatory appropriation, guided participation, and apprenticeship. In J.V. Wertsch, P.D. Rio, & A. Alvarez (Eds.), *Sociocultural studies of mind* (pp. 139-164). Cambridge University Press.
- Rogoff, B. (2003). *The cultural nature of human development*. Oxford University Press.
- Saldaña, J. (2012). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Sage.
- Shively, R. L. (2011). L2 pragmatic development in study abroad: A longitudinal study of Spanish service encounters. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 43(6), 1818-1835. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2010.10.030>
- Yang, L. (2010). Doing a group presentation: Negotiations and challenges experienced by five Chinese ESL students of commerce at a Canadian university. *Language Teaching Research*, 14(2), 141-160. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168809353872>
- Yonezawa, A. (2014). Japan's challenge of fos-

tering “global human resources”: Policy debates and practices. *Japan Labor Review*, 11(2), 37-52.

Young, R. F. (2011). Interactional competence in language learning, teaching, and testing. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning: Vol. 2.* (pp. 426-443). Routledge.