

# The Effects of a Short-Term Overseas English Program for Hokusei Gakuen University English Department Students

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## INTRODUCTION

The English Department of Hoksuei Gakuen University has been reputed to conduct successful English education. The extensive use of native speaking English teachers in basic English courses in the first two years has contributed to the positive reputation. The department also recognizes the impact of its exchange program, which has sent over 470 students as exchange students to colleges and universities in the US and UK in the past 37 years.

However, there are many students who cannot be selected as an exchange student because of the TOEFL requirement, that students earn at least 520 points in the

paper-based TOEFL, or simply cannot afford one extra year before graduation. In order to provide a chance to study English in an English speaking country for such students, the English Department has offered a short-term overseas English program to the US since 2006, and the program has started playing an important part in the curriculum of the English Department.

The primary purpose of this study is to illustrate the effects of short term overseas English programs by analyzing the results of a questionnaire given to the participants in the program conducted in 2008. The secondary purposes include presenting a realistic picture of the learning environment and introducing relatively newly-developed concepts in second language acquisition (SLA) study to see more clearly what is happening to the learners in such learning environments. I sincerely hope many will recognize the effects of rather short overseas programs and the importance of the program in the curriculum of the English Department at Hokusei Gakuen University.

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Key words : Short-term overseas English program, Study abroad, Second language acquisition, Willingness to communicate, Integrative motivation

## PREVIOUS STUDIES

Even though many may have talked about the effects of study abroad, or SA, when they see a fluent speaker of English as a second language, they may think for example, “Oh, that person lived in the US for five years, and that is why he is fluent.” This instinctive comment seems to reflect the truth, and in many cases, it does. Such comments are based on the assumption that these learners can be immersed in an input-rich environment where everything is spoken in the target language, and there are so many chances to interact in real time in a real context with so called “native speakers” of the target language.

Second language acquisition, however, seems more complicated than these instinctive comments by lay-people. The observation itself does not always reflect the reality in the learning environment in many ways.

Since the 1960s, the topic of the SA context has attracted rather sporadic attention of researchers in SLA study, and this area has started being recognized as a “subfield” of research in SLA in the last 10 years (Freed, 2008).

Because of the nature of the learning environment, it is very difficult to conduct controlled studies by comparing control groups and experimental groups and restricting variables in language learning. Depending on what is focused on in a study, the results reached in each study have produced inconsistent conclusions (Freed, 2008, pp. 115–118). So, the research in this area is constantly in progress tak-

ing in the latest research developments in SLA study.

Early studies between the 1960s and 1990s quantitatively supported the linguistic advantages of SA by measuring the gains through test scores (Freed, 2008, pp. 113–115). The early studies apparently tried to support their hypotheses or assumptions based on their observation that there seems an obvious advantage in SA context over at home (AH) context. It appears difficult to measure linguistic gains solely by means of a global proficiency test. There are obvious advantages, but it is difficult to find what gains learners have made, and it is more difficult to measure them. It is even more difficult to see linguistic gain exclusively from the experience of the short-term program.

Since the 1990s, the research in this area has been developing through the correction of possible errors in the previous studies and employing more comprehensive approaches by introducing newly developed concepts along with the development of SLA research in general. One such early contribution to the development of this research was made by Brecht and Davidson (1991), who conducted a multi-year study while employing both “quantitative and qualitative instruments” (cited in Freed, 2008).

Freed (1995) incorporated “communicative and sociolinguistic gains” to measure more linguistic benefits among SA learners. By utilizing these gains, it is more likely to see the advancement in learning, which cannot be measured as easily as fluency.

Siegel (1995) described “the pragmatic

conflict” and saw cultural learning as a part of language learning (cited in Freed, 2008).

Coleman (1998) employed a “self-assessment score” to measure linguistic gains as a result of a certain exchange program. In this study, the concepts of “attitude, strategies and behavior” were assessed along with “changes in intercultural competence.”

In a study by Wilkinson (1998), limited linguistic interaction was reported for the first time in many home stay experiences (cited in Freed, 2008), as was the case in this study. Different amounts of interaction were reported by the participants of Hokusei Gakuen University’s short-term overseas English program. Interaction with native speakers outside the classroom was very limited.

Yashima and Nishide (2008) conducted a longitudinal study on the students in a high school to see the impact of SA comparing linguistic gains against those of students in two types of AH environments. They demonstrated a bigger gain among students who experienced a one year SA program and similar gains among AH students who were taught English with a more communicative and content-based approach. They attributed the gains by such students to the “acculturation,” “motivation,” and “willingness to communicate” developed by being exposed to “an imagined international community” (pp. 568–569).

It is all the more difficult to compare the SA students and the AH students at this moment in the 21st century. There used to be a huge gap between SA con-

text and AH context in Japan in even the 20th century. English classes used to be the only place where students were exposed to English, and English spoken by the teachers was the only English they listened to. Japanese English teachers used to be negatively characterized by their strong accents and their lack of fluency. The advantage of the SA environment was very big.

At present, however, there seems less of a gap in terms of accuracy of pronunciation and fluency of English teachers because there are more native speaking English teachers than ever and there are many Japanese English teachers who have experienced their SA and come back to Japan to teach English. In addition, because of the advancement of computer technology and the Internet, which have provided more exposure to spoken English for learners in even an EFL situation, students are commonly exposed to spoken English. Furthermore, because of the diversification and development of the practice of classroom teaching (language teaching methodology), the advantage of the SA context has been drastically narrowed.

In spite of such a narrowed advantage of the SA context, it still brings a lot of positive effect on learning English. Some effects are clearly visible, and some are hidden and difficult to show quantitatively. In this paper, I would like to show such hidden effects by presenting questionnaire results and relating them to more newly developed concepts in related areas, such as psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, and many others to support the author’s instinctive observations.

## CURRENT STUDIES

### Class Description

The English Department of Hokusei Gakuen University conducted a short-term overseas English program at the University of California San Diego (UCSD) Extension in August in 2008. The students participated in a four-week program, named "Conversation Plus." The classroom instruction was from 9 AM to 1 PM 4 hours a day, 5 days a week, a total of 80 hours for the whole program. Classroom instruction was done based on ESL textbooks such as *Touchstone* or *World Link*, which are used in Oral English classes provided for the first-and second-year students at Hokusei Gakuen University. The students were placed on nine different levels, according to their performance on a placement test conducted on the first day of the program.

Many things concerning classroom activities were determined by the designated teachers. Some teachers were more grammar centered, and some provided more communication-driven instruction.

One day of the week, for half the class-time, students had free conversation lessons, called "Conversation Leader," in which a student of UCSD was assigned to a group of three to four and had conversation with the students about general topics, such as life in the US.

Another day of the week, guest speakers came to the school and talked about their life in the US. The speakers were a carpenter, a surfer, a musician, and a pot-painting artist.

One day for a whole class time, students

went on a field trip to cultural or historical sites in San Diego, such as Old Town, the Midway Museum, and Balboa Park, where the class teachers became like tour guides, explaining to the students in English what they were seeing.

In any situation, there is no perfect lesson, and this was the case with the program as a whole too. There were some points where the program could improve from my point of view. The conversation leaders were not trained ESL teachers. They seemed to be engaged in topics they were particularly familiar with, without taking into consideration the interests the Japanese students had. They paid more attention to more talkative students, such as those from Italy, and less attention to less talkative students, such as the Japanese female students, while some conversation leaders educated effectively and built a good relationship with all the students of the group. I pointed out these problems to the program coordinator after the program ended, and the UCSD Extension promised to train conversation leaders to be more effective partners from 2009.

In addition, the field trip was not well organized in terms of language instruction, even though it provided students some cultural experience. Students spent 30-45 minutes on a bus sitting with a student from the same country, using their own native language. The explanation done by the teacher was sometimes barely audible, because the teachers spoke without a microphone and students didn't pay much attention to what was being explained. The UCSD Extension also promised to or-

ganize the trip better and monitor the students' language use in English more closely.

Taking it into consideration that UCSD Extension listens to their partners' suggestions and advice and modifies their program into better shape, which seems very rare for the host schools to do, UCSD Extension can be considered to be a good place to conduct the program. In talking with the chaperones I have met during stays in Santa Barbara and San Diego, they all seem to have problems communicating with different schools in order to find an appropriate program for their students.

Because Hokusei Gakuen University's English Department is seeking a place where the students are mixed with the students from different countries, it is more desired to place them into an existing language program rather than a customized one, in which they would be isolated from other international students.

But what is difficult about placing students into an existing language program is the schedules of such programs. The schools on the East Coast and in the Midwest in the US do not have four-week summer programs which just match the summer break of Japanese schools in duration, especially in Hokkaido, where it is usually from the beginning of August to the middle or the end of September.

However, Hokusei's summer break will be shortened in 2010 because a requirement that classes be held a minimum 15 times per term is being imposed. When the summer break is shortened, it will mean that many Japanese schools lose a

very precious educational opportunity for their students to experience living in an English speaking country in a safe environment. Increasing the number of class meetings does not necessarily increase the quality of education at a school. Under such circumstances, it is necessary to customize the program to fit our school's schedule. A customized program cannot produce educational outcomes equivalent to those of Hokusei's current short-term program because there will be only Hokusei students in the classes.

### **Accommodations**

Out of 30, 6 students chose to stay with host families, 5 in on-campus apartments, and 19 in off-campus apartments.

Home stay host families were arranged by a private agency. The home stay environment was not as desirable as people normally expect. One of the students complained that the house where she stayed had become a gathering place for a certain ethnic group, from which the host family mother came. She was a single mother, and according to the student she had too strong an accent to comprehend her English.

On the second day of the stay, the agency representative came to UCSD to collect money for the home stay, and there was a chance to talk with the person about the student's complaint. The representative quickly responded to the claim and offered another home stay to the student. This incident tells us that the agency is quite flexible and sensitive to their clients' complaints, but it tells us more. Offering home stay to the students

has become a business and many families are offering accommodations for the purpose of making money. This trend seemed much stronger in San Diego than in Santa Barbara. But it could be only temporary. In the year 2008, there was a boom of international students in San Diego. There were an exceptional number of students from all over the world, and there was a shortage of host families. The low quality of the host family environment could be blamed on the shortage. In 2009, probably because of economic turmoil and the H1N1 pandemic, the total number of students in our program dropped dramatically, and the quality of the host family seems to have improved. Therefore, the undesired environment of the home stay could be only temporary, but choosing home stay is still risky.

UCSD's on-campus apartments are apartments where mainly international students stay on campus. Three meals are offered at the campus cafeterias. They open at 7 AM and close at 7 PM. Because of the time saved by eating at a cafeteria and the functional curfew of needing to be on time for dinner in addition to the safe campus environment, the international students mixed with each other well and spent a lot of time talking and having parties. The complaints from the students were concerned with the limited time available for enjoying nighttime outside the campus, and the monotonous campus food, despite occasional appreciation of the abundance of food available in the cafeteria, and the reasonable cost.

Off-campus apartments are in a large apartment compound for students' hous-

ing run by a private company. The apartments are located 15 minutes away from the main campus of UCSD by bus. There was no curfew and students were very free even though their chaperone stayed there. Meals are not offered, so they have to be cooked. An apartment has two rooms, each of which has two beds. The residents have one roommate and two other apartment mates (housemates) in a different room. Roommates and housemates are sometimes international students from different countries and sometimes from Japan. Hokusei students seem to have enjoyed the freedom.

There was one student who wasn't satisfied with the off-campus accommodations, but overall the students evaluated them very highly. All the participants thought the type of accommodations they chose was the best choice. Each group faced some difficulties, but solving such problems leads to satisfaction and a sense of achievement. It is very difficult to conclude what type of accommodation is the best choice for students. It might depend on the personality and life-style of each student. Therefore, it is important to provide information about accommodations beforehand and let them choose by themselves.

### Questionnaire Survey

A questionnaire survey was conducted twice by use of WebTube, an LMS software package, a week after the program and one year later. The questions included Yes/No questions and open-ended questions, to which the students could freely write answers to the questions. The

author received responses from all the 30 students in the first questionnaire and 22 responses in the second questionnaire. The difference in the number of responses can be blamed on the decrease of the use of the campus emailing system by the students. All the information necessary before and during the program was provided through email by way of WebTube. Therefore, the response from the students right after the program was very high, but it decreased a lot one year later, also because the use of online software for class assignments decreases dramatically in the third year and fourth year. In addition two students were studying abroad.

The post-program questionnaire included questions regarding evaluation of the whole program; preparation for the trip provided by the teacher in charge and the travel agent; classes at UCSD Extension; accommodations; and the teacher as a chaperone. It also asked the students about their language development, their cultural awareness, and change in themselves in terms of their attitude toward both the culture and language of the country they visited.

The second questionnaire asked the students more about the change in their life since the trip in terms of cultural interaction, attitude toward the study of English, and self-assessed language improvement. In addition, some questions targeted more specific areas of the subfield of SA, such as willingness to communicate.

### Language Development

The post-program questionnaire showed 29 students out of 30 thought their overall language skills improved, while all answered “strongly agree” or “agree” to the question which asked whether they were glad that they participated in the program. In terms of skills, many of the students reported greater oral skills, such as pronunciation, listening, and communicating rather than grammar, reading or writing. All three who claimed they made progress in grammar also claimed they made progress in fluency, pronunciation, listening, and communicating. We can infer that they had the impression that they made overall progress in oral production and they improved grammar in production rather than understanding grammar.

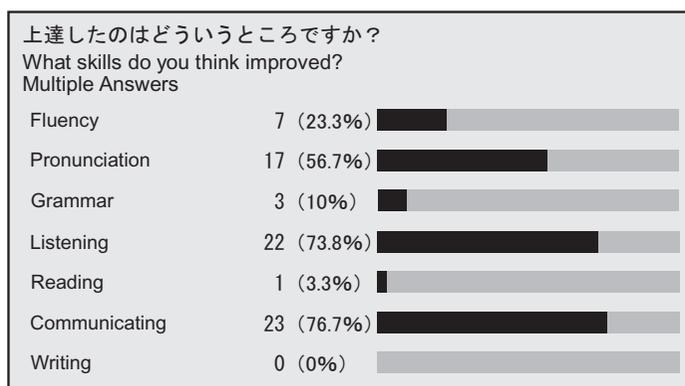


(Figure 1. Overall Perceived Improvement : Survey 1)

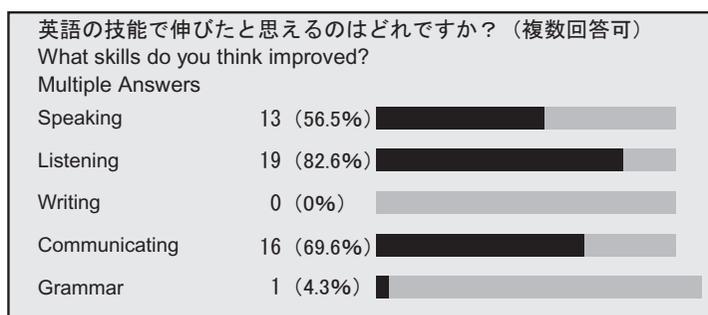
These data might be considered to have replicated the finding of Collettine (2004), who reported negative results of grammar development comparing to the control group who studied in their country. It might be very difficult for Japanese students to make progress in grammar because the instructions they receive until they graduate from high school are grammar centered. It is more difficult to measure the progress in use of grammar in speech because the more complicated the sentence structure they use, the more mistakes they tend to make. But the overall impression among the students is that they knew the grammar but they didn't

know how to use it properly in speech.

Many of the students have claimed that they learned from the performance of Italian students how important it is to express what they think even though their grammar is not correct and not to be afraid of making grammar mistakes. 77% of the participants claimed that they improved their communication skill. They said that it is very important to express what they think without being worried about whether they can make themselves understood, and this awareness may raise their communication skills or create that impression.



(Figure 2. Perceived Improved Skills : Survey 1)



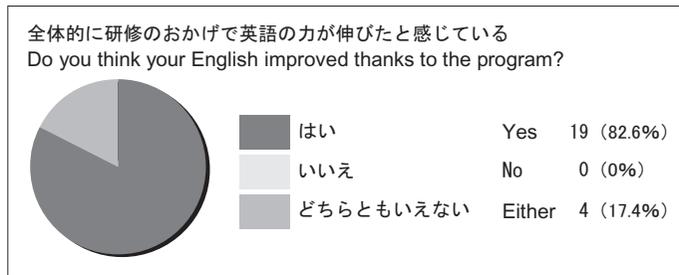
(Figure 3. Perceived Improved Skills : Survey 2)

Many (57%) of the students claimed that their pronunciation was improved. In the question “What made the most difference?” some claimed there existed psychological difficulty in producing “native-like” pronunciation in Japan. Experiencing not being understood, and experiencing difficulty in understanding the English of speakers from other countries, such as Italy, contributed to their raised awareness about their false pronunciation. American English seems more readily acceptable as a model among Japanese students while living in US than while living in Japan. They feel more embarrassed producing native-like pronunciation in Japan, but it is more embarrassing for them to use English with a strong Japanese accent in the US. Some students also attributed their improvement in pronunciation to the immersion environment where only “correct” English is being spoken. They started thinking of English not just as a language but their own language. This is a matter of psychological ownership of English. It is very difficult to make this shift while they are studying in Japan. Another factor in the Hokusei students’ learning process might be the effect of an abundance of spoken input, which may lead students to phonological readiness by their taking it as a norm, and I believe the combination of these two factors worked together to produce positive outcomes.

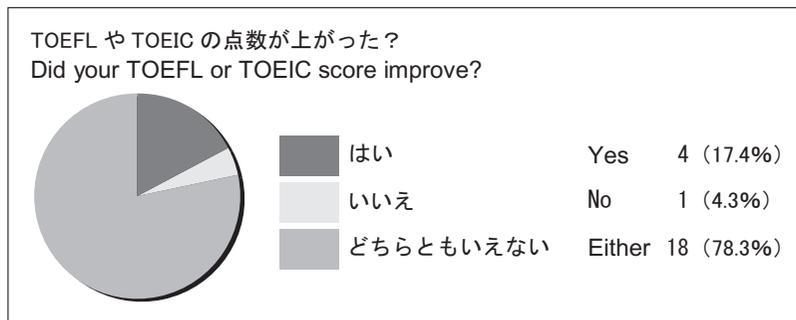
There was an interesting occurrence during the stay in San Diego. Because of the strong impression created by the Italian people there, such as their behaviors and their Italian accents, some students started imitating Italian English, which

then spread to almost everybody in the Hokusei group. It seemed much easier for them to imitate Italian English than to imitate English norms, possibly because of the phonological similarity between Italian and Japanese. However, being able to reproduce Italian accents made such students more aware of the difference between English and other phonologies, and they ended up being able to produce more of a native-like pronunciation of English. This is a rather instinctive analysis by myself based on experience as an English learner and an English teacher, but I’ve found it is also beneficial for Japanese students to talk to more international students to raise their phonological awareness.

In terms of exposure to spoken English and amount of input, the assumed advantage of studying abroad over studying in a foreign language learning environment has been narrowed because of the advancement of information technology and language teaching methods in Japan. Therefore, it is all the more difficult to demonstrate the advantage of studying abroad by presenting better scores on proficiency tests, such as TOEFL and TOEIC, even though many students feel a year later their English skills have improved thanks to the program. However, I think I can conclude that their English has improved not only because of the increased amount of input but also because of more psychological changes occurring through their being in an English speaking country.



(Figure 4. Overall Perceived Improvement Thanks to the Program : Survey 2)

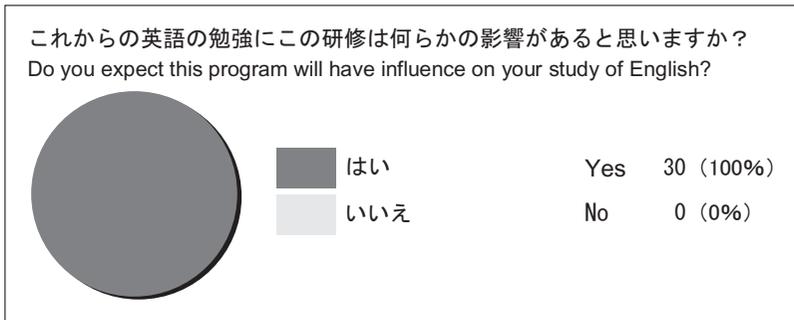


(Figure 5. TOEFL, TOEIC Score Improvement : Survey 2)

The amount of input from direct interaction with native speakers of English seems to have been very limited. Of the students who stayed with a host family, three of six claimed that the family members weren't home when the students were. Meals were just placed on a table, and they rarely had conversation for a lengthy period. However, one home stay student also mentioned that it was so beneficial to have been put in an environment where she had to use English with a person who did not understand Japanese at all in order to get things done.

In addition, the students who stayed in on-campus apartments and off-campus apartments also had few chances to interact with native English speakers outside their classrooms except for occasional short conversations with sales clerks or

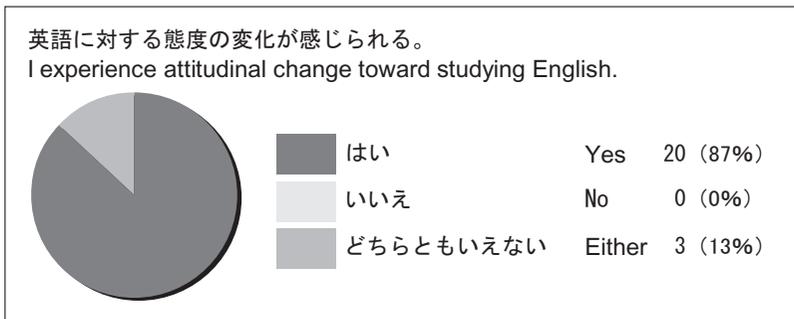
with local people on a bus. The students had more contact with speakers of English as a second language or foreign language like themselves. All the participants, even including non-English majors, said that there would be some influence of the program on their future study of English. Though Sunderman & Kroll (2009) mention that a certain proficiency is required to take full advantage of the studying abroad context, if there is linguistic support from a chaperone at the initial stage, a good result can be produced among such students. There is a lot that students with lower proficiency can learn even though sudden language growth cannot be expected.



(Figure 6. Expected Influence on Students' Study of English : Survey 1)

Even a year later, 87% of the students claimed that they experienced attitudinal change toward studying English. They clearly mentioned that after participating they were more motivated to study English and to try to produce more native-

like pronunciation. Therefore, we may conclude the amount of input and interaction with native speakers is not a crucial matter for successful short-term language programs.



(Figure 7. Attitudinal Changes Toward Studying English : Survey 2)

Therefore, the mere physical fact that they are in an English speaking country has removed psychological barriers and biases for students. In order to take a closer look at what is happening to the students, more psychological analysis might be necessary.

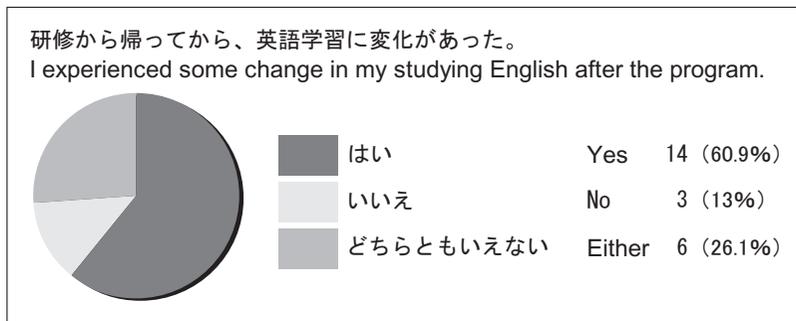
One of the biggest advantages of SA programs is that, in them, students are all responsible for their own language production. There is no teacher's guidance or facilitation for individual conversation, and it is rare for learners to be on their own

like this while studying in Japan. It is also difficult for teachers to put students in such an environment in classrooms in Japan. One of the students mentioned that it is difficult to initiate conversation and know how to respond to others' comments. Such "discourse markers" are only learned in an environment where students are voluntarily trying to have communication. There are many nonverbal markers, such as nodding, or signaling miscommunication by the use of facial expressions. It seems very difficult to have conversation

on an equal footing with other English speakers without having this kind of socio-linguistic skill because students tend to use more Japanese-like reactions, which make them look childish. This involves teachability or learnability issues. The question is whether this type of skill is something to be taught or something to be learned. It is very difficult to teach the importance of this kind of linguistic or non-linguistic communicative skill without students' awareness. Therefore, I may conclude that this kind of overseas program raises their awareness and their readiness for socio-linguistic features of language

use and it is very difficult to measure this kind of development by tests like TOEFL or TOEIC.

The strong positive response about the effects of this short-term English program had dropped slightly a year later. Some students claimed that they had experienced improvement on TOEFL or TOEIC, but it is not clear that this is because of the program. As for the response to the question concerning skills, the response of a year later was similar to that on the first survey. 83% of the students considered their listening to have improved because of the language program.



(Figure 8. Actual Change in Studying English : Survey 2)

The attitudinal change toward studying English was less than the perceived improvement in English. Among those who said they could not say either yes or no, some claimed that they experienced changes in understanding other cultures and people, but it is difficult to see the change in their studying English because the opportunity to be exposed to English in the classroom had decreased after the end of the program.

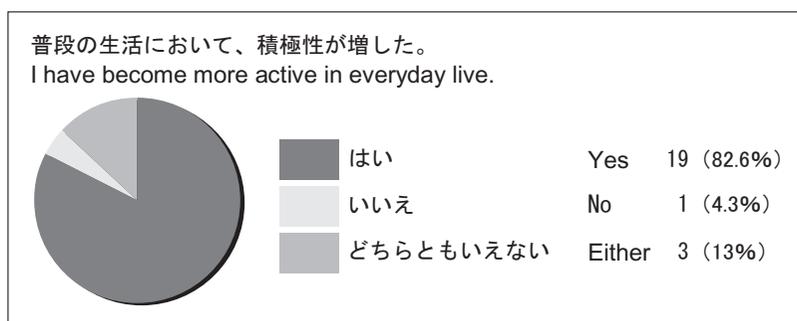
The attitudinal change toward English itself was much bigger than toward studying English. The questions seem a little

ambiguous in comparison with the following open-ended question, which asks them to write in concrete terms, so it might be better for us to take a look at both questions as one. Students seemed more time conscious in answering the first question. It is obvious that there was a positive effect. Many mentioned that they try to imagine when they will use English while learning. They also mentioned the advantage of being able to use English to communicate with people from different countries. They seem to have found a good and practical reason for learning English.

Many students in Japan study English at college because their English performance in high school classes was high in answering questions on tests. Therefore, experi-

encing short-term study abroad grows students' motivation and provides a good reason to study further.

### Other Effects

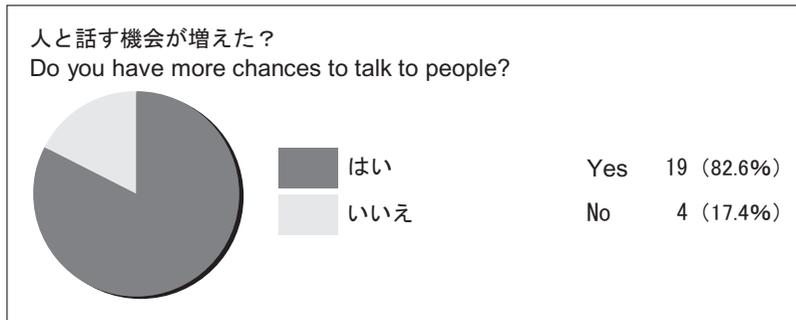


(Figure 9. Increased Positive Attitude : Survey 2)

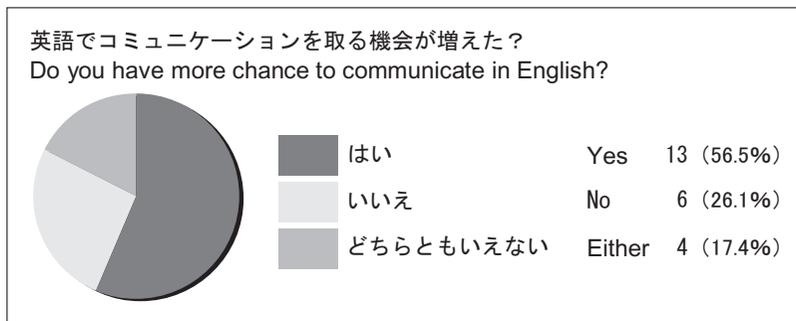
In Survey 1, conducted right after the program's completion in an open-end question concerning what they thought they lacked, 14 of the participants answered vocabulary. They experienced not being able to express what they wanted to say, and many blamed it on their meager vocabulary. However, some blamed it on their attitude toward communication. The Italian people in the program also had left a huge impact on the Hokusei students in this area too. They seemed more spontaneous and very instinctive and assertive in speaking. To the same question, 4 mentioned that they needed to be more assertive, and 2 said they needed automaticity in responding to their own spontaneous feelings as their Italian classmates demonstrated.

The same number, 19, said they now had more chances to talk to people. They also were taking more opportunities to contact more people. 13 claimed a year

later that they had had more chances to communicate in English. As one of the students commented, it is more important to be willing to talk to more people, and one should have something to talk about, something interesting to share with people, and they themselves should be interesting too.



(Figure 10. Increased Opportunities to Talk to People : Survey 2)



(Figure 11. Increased Willingness to Communicate in English : Survey 2)

There are also differences in attitude and motivation regarding the target language and its culture between those who are willing to live in a foreign country to learn the language and those who are not in the first place. Such differences are believed to produce differences in gaining proficiency (Gardner and MacIntyre, 1993, cited by Dörnyei, 2001). Learners who have willingness to adapt to the culture of the target language are considered to have a higher degree of “integrativeness (integrative motivation)” (Gardner, 2008).

It seems an undeniable fact that many people have taken advantage of opportunities for learning English in SA contexts, but not everybody has benefited from the learning environment. As Sunderman &

Kroll (2009) mention in their research on American students who study Japanese in SA contexts, students who lack “a certain threshold of resources are unable to benefit from SA context in terms of being able to produce accurately in the L2” (p. 95). Individual differences, such as motivation and learning style, may affect the degree of language development, but taking into account that the participants in this program have gone through three semesters of basic English classes at Hokusei and all voluntarily apply, the ratio of successful and beneficial results can be expected to be very high. Students must have a willingness to be placed in such a foreign environment, and they must have more acceptance of the acculturation process to be

accustomed to such an environment.

## CONCLUSION

Hokusei Gakuen University's English Department has conducted a short-term overseas language program in which students stay in one place and study in a school for four weeks in California. In 2007, 20 students studied English in the University of California Santa Barbara Extension for four weeks in August, and the class was later moved to San Diego because of the closure of the English program in Santa Barbara. In 2008, 30 students participated in the four-week summer language program in the University of California San Diego (UCSD) Extension. In 2009, 13 students participated in the program in the UCSD Extension.

The number of the participants dropped dramatically to 13, partly because of the influence of the world-wide economic turmoil, which started at the end of 2008. This was about when the applications for the program were being collected. The decrease was also partly due to the geographical proximity of San Diego to Mexico, where the H1N1 virus infection was reported earlier than any other place in the world. There was heated media reaction to H1N1 virus infection cases, many of which involved tourists who came back to Japan from foreign countries. Despite the temporary drop in the number of participants, the demand for the program seems very high and the recognition of the program among students has been increasing.

Despite the popularity of the overseas

language program, it is in danger due to the strict regulations on the required minimum number of classroom meetings, recently imposed by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology. Requiring 15 meetings will result in a shortened summer break. It will be very difficult to conduct a four-week program in summer for several reasons. The only alternative left is conducting the class during spring break. There are several advantages to the summer program over the one held in the spring.

Students are supposed to have been enrolled at Hokusei at least one year to participate in the program. Therefore, students in the second year or over are able to participate. For third year students, when they come back, it is still the end of summer break and it is early enough for them to start job hunting. If they miss a month in March, it is a big loss for the students.

The advantage for the second year students is that they still will have some oral English classes and other English classes even after the program. They are able to demonstrate what they have learned in such classes and they can learn more by knowing what is required to learn in order to be able to use the language in real life. Beginning in the third year, the number of hours dramatically drops because the focus of the studies is directed to more specific areas, such as American or British literature, linguistics, intercultural communication, socio-linguistics or language teaching.

It is, therefore, very important to share the recognition of educational outcomes

expected from this kind of overseas language program in order to make it survive.

Taking the linguistic gains and pedagogical effects of the short-term language program and the advantages of conducting it in summer into consideration, I request that the Hokusei Gakuen University administration also recognize the positive effects of the program and arrange the academic schedule to keep the length of summer break as long as it has been.

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[Abstract]

## The Effects of a Short-Term Overseas English Program for Hokusei Gakuen University English Department Students

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The purpose of this paper is to illustrate the effects of a short-term overseas English program conducted by the Hokusei Gakuen University English Department. It is very difficult to measure such effects only quantitatively using standard proficiency tests, such as TOEFL and TOEIC. This study employs open-ended questions to see the effects more qualitatively in relation to sociolinguistic gains and psychological effects on the participants. This paper concludes that the effects of experiencing even a short-term overseas program are very positive, and the recognition of such a program as an important part of the curriculum of the English Department at Hokusei Gakuen University is necessary.

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Key words : Short-term overseas English program, Study abroad, Second language acquisition, Willingness to communicate, Integrative motivation

