

Effective Pre-Departure Seminars and Short-Term Overseas English Programs

白 鳥 金 吾

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Kingo SHIRATORI

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[Abstract]

This study provides suggestions for the development of effective pre-departure seminars and short-term overseas English programs for Japanese junior college students. The aim of such seminars and programs is to assist students in adapting to their changing social needs. Results obtained from a questionnaire and a Can-Do list provided to participants in the 2014-2015 program conducted in Japan and the U.K. were utilized in this study. It is hoped that this study will stimulate research into effective and appropriate pre-departure seminars and overseas English programs, and that it will benefit students who are learners of a second language, teachers, and other researchers.

1. Introduction

Hokusei Gakuen University Junior College provides two-year study courses and supports junior college students who continue their education at colleges and universities in Japan as well as those who wish to study abroad. The English Department has an excellent reputation in successfully conducting courses for English education, which involve the extensive use of native English speakers to teach the Basic English courses in the first year. Students then progress to practicing English within a unique curriculum that includes lectures in psychology, history, and geography. The teaching of these other subjects by native English speakers in the second year has greatly contributed to the department's positive reputation.

The department encourages students to look to use English in their future workplaces within the global community. In 2011, the department commenced a new program with classes such as *Introduction to Hospitality*, *Hospitality and Tourism*, and *Internships*. In 2015, the

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Global Internship program was introduced. These classes have been designed to assist junior college students in preparing for future job opportunities not only in the airline, hospitality, and tourism industries but also in a variety of other fields.

Over the past 30 years, the department has offered short-term (approximately 24 days) and long-term (approximately 4–5 months) overseas programs in countries such as the U.K., the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and Malaysia. Overseas placement has played a vital role in the development of the department's curriculum. In 2013, the department started an overseas internship program of nine days to Malaysia and Hong Kong. In 2014, more than 60% of the first-year students participated in such programs. These programs provide students with a rich educational experience by providing exposure to the culture, history, and language of the visited country.

The world's business environment has expanded to the point where numerous companies compete on a global level. There is an increasing need for new employees with high proficiency levels of English and who are globally aware. Therefore, it is imperative that business programs offer some form of international experience to enhance the skills of those who possess advanced English skills, thus helping students gain a better understanding of the global environment in which they will work. Therefore, the department has commenced discussions aimed at providing students with an effective, appropriate format for a pre-departure seminar and study abroad program.

Previous study has shown that the most important factor in facilitating communication is the frequency of English use (Clement, Baker, & MacIntyre, 2003). Dekeyser (2000) also points out that the implicit acquisition process requires a massive amount of input, which can only be provided by a total immersion program. Tanaka & Ellis (2003) indicates that staying overseas experience helps EFL learners develop the confidence and motivation in learning English throughout the frequency of English use. So, the numbers of study abroad program offered by colleges and universities has grown consistently over the past decade, and a variety of options for study abroad such as long and short term study abroad, study and intern abroad, and international volunteer programs have been seen to accommodate students' differing skills, aims, and resources. However, there are still issues regarding the educational benefits of studying abroad, and many researchers have discussed them to develop effective study abroad programs (Kirchhoff, 2015; Olson & Lalley, 2012; Tanaka & Ellis, 2003).

This study primarily aims to provide suggestions for the development of effective pre-departure seminars and short-term overseas English programs for junior college students. The aim of such seminars and programs is to assist students in adapting to the changing social needs. Results obtained from a questionnaire and a Can-Do list provided to participants in the 2014–2015 program conducted in Japan and the U.K. were utilized in this study.

2. Method

2.1 Participants

Study participants were 32 female students from the English department. They included 29 first-year students and three second-year students; the average age of the participants was 19 years. On average, all participants had previously studied English for seven-eight years (including six years at junior and senior high school). The average test of English as a foreign language (TOEFL) paper-based test (PBT) scores of the first-year students in January 2015 – one week before departure – was approximately 423 points. According to a questionnaire conducted in September 2014, 90.4% of the participants enjoyed learning English, and 93.6% of the participants considered studying English as important. A majority of the students had either no or very limited exposure to international travel.

2.2 Description of Pre-Departure Seminars and the Short-Term Overseas English Program

In cooperation with the International Office, the English department faculty designed the entire program. The program comprises two elements: a pre-departure seminar and a faculty-led, short-term overseas English program. Individuals from the faculty developed the pre-departure seminar design and depending on the locations about which he/she possessed knowledge or in which they had connections, they determined which country the student would visit. The pre-departure seminar included 15 classes (90 minutes per class) conducted from September 2014 to January 2015. The 24-day trip occurred during spring break. To participate in the study abroad program, students were required to complete the pre-departure seminar; however, there was no language requirement for the program. In this study, students who visited the U.K. were surveyed.

2.3 Pre-Departure Seminar

The pre-departure seminar is aimed at preparing students for their international experience. A typical seminar includes pre-departure orientation; lectures about the culture, history, and customs of the country of destination; and English conversation lessons. Young Japanese people are known to be somewhat shy, and/or quiet in class. In contrast, the overseas curriculum tends to emphasize the importance of group discussions and oral presentations; students are expected to be active in class, which was considered relatively challenging for the participants in the program. Considering this difficulty, a number of activities were added to the program to provide practice to students in active participation while learning. The details of the additional activities are discussed below.

2.4 Research, Presentation, and Pre-departure Essay

Students were assigned tasks of undertaking research, preparing presentations, and writing a pre-departure essay to foster increased levels of interest in the language, way of life, and culture of the U.K. beyond the orientation provided in the pre-departure seminars.

Moreover, these tasks aimed to help foster an attitude of active participation in students' learning.

Students were expected to give two group presentations related to their chosen field on the differing cultural aspects of Japan and the U.K. such as "The difference between Japanese tea and English tea" or "the different kinds of convenience stores." After researching a certain project topic, participants then presented their findings to the class. While in the U.K., participants displayed the same presentations to their host families, certain academic staff, and other international students.

In addition, after watching three U.K. films and reading two books concerning life and culture in the U.K., participants were instructed to complete a pre-departure essay before leaving Japan.

2.5 "English lunch" and Online English Conversation Classes

The purpose of holding an "English lunch" and online English conversation classes was to help the participants build their confidence when speaking in and listening to English.

The English lunch was organized as a gathering in which anyone could join to chat with teachers and English-speaking tutors from other countries over lunch. It was held on weekdays in the college lounge during the spring and fall semesters (May-July and September-December, respectively). Students brought their own food and seemed to enjoy meeting and talking with other attendees. Program participants were required to join the English lunch at least seven times during the fall semester.

In addition, the participants took eight online, one-to-one English conversation classes on Skype of 25 minutes in length with English-speaking teachers from the Philippines. The availability of class times varied from morning to evening, seven days a week; participants could choose a time that best suited them.

2.6 The Short-term Overseas English Program

A short-term overseas English program was conducted at New College Nottingham (NCN) in the U.K. from January 2015 to February 2015. Typically, previous programs included a combination of ESL classes, industry visits, excursions, and homestay experiences over a 24-day period. For this program, in cooperation with NCN, a tailored three-week program, named "The Afternoon Tea Project" and Hospitality Business was created. The program was designed to provide participants with the opportunity to practice their English skills while developing a range of other skills and to learn more about the global business environment. All participants who completed this program received a certification for "An introduction to International Business Skills" from NCN.

2.7 English Lessons

English lessons were conducted at NCN. The participants attended English as a foreign language (EFL) classes from 9:00a.m. to 12:30p.m., five days a week. The students were

placed in one of six different class levels determined by their proficiency demonstrated via a placement test, which queried aspects of grammar, listening skills, and interview skills. This test was conducted on the first day of the program. Class sizes ranged, on average, from 10 to 18 students, and there were many students from other countries, such as France, Spain, Greece, the Middle East, and China.

2.8 The Afternoon Tea Project

Participants were instructed in the basic elements of English used in event management, British culture and history, manners and etiquette, flower arrangement, and hospitality. For example, in the flower arrangement class, participants learned about the history of flower arrangement as well as how to prepare a floral arrangement. This project provided opportunities for students to experience a real working environment, which included working with bakery staff in the NCN bakery to prepare English scones. At the end of each lesson, they were allowed to take their floral arrangement and scones home. Further, they invited their host families to the “Tea Party Project” and served meals and drinks.

2.9 Hospitality Business

The hospitality business program included hospitality services and hospitality in aviation. Participants chose one of these programs according to their interest. They attended special classes or activities led by professionals from the fields of hospitality services or hospitality in aviation. In the hospitality services class, participants learned the basic aspects of customer service, hospitality, and catering in the U.K. At the end of the program, they visited a casino in Nottingham and had a chance to meet the employees and ask questions regarding job roles, duties, skills, and qualifications and the favorite aspects of the job. This study trip was a good introduction for those students who had never visited a casino, which has been a subject under consideration for Japan. In the class on hospitality in aviation, participants gained a basic understanding of the aviation industry and the required English skills. To deepen their understanding of this industry, a study trip to the Birmingham Airport was organized. Employees of Turkish Airlines gave the students a tour of the airport facilities and explained the requirements for becoming a cabin attendant or ground staff member.

In addition, all participants visited the London office of H.I.S., one of the leading travel agencies in Japan. During each visit, participants had the opportunity to interact with travel professionals and become familiar with a specific company’s missions and values as well as gain insight into industry trends. The visits to H.I.S. allowed the students to observe how Japanese people work overseas.

3. Data Collection and Analysis

3.1 Questionnaire

The first and second pre-departure seminar questionnaires included 88 items designed to

determine the effect of the pre-departure seminar and short-term overseas English program on participants. Moreover, 10 questions concerning the experience of being in a completely English-speaking environment were included in the questionnaire. Further items to evaluate the effect of the pre-departure seminars in terms of learning styles and time required for learning were excluded from this questionnaire.

3.2 Can-Do List

Although no proficiency test was conducted in this study, participants were required to self-evaluate their English proficiency level to determine their improvement over the period of the entire program – from September to February. This self-evaluation was measured using a Can-Do list. This list comprised 23 statements in language-related situations, against each of which students had to rate their ability from one (completely untrue) to five (completely true) with regard to performing a task in a given situation. The list was based on an *EIKEN Can-Do list developed by EIKEN, which is a leading organization of English proficiency testing in Japan.

Generally, scores from the Can-Do statements are used to assess learners' level of language proficiency. However, in this study, the average scores on the EIKEN Can-Do statements were used as a general measure of self-evaluation in proficiency rather than a specific indication of communicative ability. The average Can-Do score are assumed to reflect participants' confidence in their communication skills. The original Can-Do statements were written in Japanese.

*EIKEN Can-Do list: The EIKEN Can-Do list (EIKEN, 2013) is the product of a large-scale research project conducted by EIKEN. Self-assessment questionnaires were used to create a comprehensive snapshot of what EIKEN test-takers believe they can accomplish in using English in real-life situations. Over 20,000 test takers, who had recently passed one of the seven levels of EIKEN tests, responded to the survey. The list provides Can-Do statements describing the ability to use language in each of the four major skill areas – reading, listening, speaking, and writing – for each of the seven EIKEN grades. The grades range from Grade 5 (beginner) to Grade 1 (advanced), with two bridging levels (Grades Pre-1 and Pre-2). In this study, the researcher used some Grade Pre-1 and Grade 2 Can-Do statements, which were considered to be equal to or above the participants' average English proficiency levels.

4. Procedure

All participants were required to complete sets comprising a questionnaire and Can-Do statement before and after they had participated in the pre-departure seminars. The first set was completed on the first day of the pre-departure seminar in September 2014, and the second set was completed on the final day of the pre-departure seminar in January 2015, which was two weeks before departure. The third set was completed three days before

departing from the U.K. in February 2015. The data from one student was excluded from the analysis, as she was absent when one of the sets was conducted and did not complete the set correctly. The data from 31 students was used for this research.

5. Results

5.1 Learning Hour/Learning Style

The first research question in this study concerned the changes in participants' learning hours and learning strategies before, during, and after the pre-departure seminar. The researcher used a paired t-test formula for the research question. Table 1 illustrates the changes in participants' average number of learning hours other than those spent in classes on both weekdays and weekends. Participants were asked to answer the question using a Likert-type scale, with seven ratings instead of five ratings: one (none), two (less than 30 minutes), three (more than 30 minutes), four (more than 1 hour), five (more than 2 hours), six (more than 3 hours), or seven (more than 4 hours). The average score measured in January for each of the items was below 4.00, which was between 30 minutes and one hour of learning time. Participants had inadequate exposure to English because there were few opportunities, other than in class, for them to study English – though the average learning hours on weekends indicated a significant difference.

Table 2 displays changes in frequency of the participants' use of learning places or facilities. Participants were asked to use a Likert-type five-point scale: one (none), two (sometimes), three (once a week), four (two-three times a week), or five (more than four times a week). The frequency of studying at the college library ($t [30] = -1.98, p < .01$) indicated a trend of significant difference. The frequency of attending "English lunch" ($t [30] = -7.68, p < .001$) indicated a significant difference in the frequency before and after departure. Conversely, there was no difference in the frequency of using the "Writing Lab" ($t [30] = 0.00, n.s$), "Super English" ($t [30] = 1.56, n.s$), and "CALL" ($t [30] = 0.00, n.s$), all of which junior college students were encouraged to use by the English department. Participants may have studied in the college library and joined the "English lunch" simply because they were required to complete the pre-departure essays and join the "English lunch" before leaving Japan.

Table 3 illustrates the changes in frequency of the participants' use of learning places or facilities. Participants were asked to use a Likert-type five-point scale: (1) I totally disagree, (2) I somewhat disagree, (3) I am undecided, (4) I mostly agree, or (5) I totally agree. Significant changes were found in responses to question 2 – for example, "I try to find opportunities to use English as much as possible" ($t [30] = -2.794, p < .01$) and question 3, for example, "Improving my English skills is one of my specific goals (e.g., Test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) or TOEFL scores)" ($t [30] = -1.715, p < .01$). One consideration is

that the participants' eagerness to use English increased as the departure date approached. Moreover, the responses to question 3 could be attributed to the fact that this questionnaire was conducted one week before TOEFL testing and three months before TOEIC testing, both of which are mandatory for all first-year students.

These results showed that participants spent only a small amount of time studying English by themselves and that the pre-departure seminar had a limited impact on participants' motivation to learn English. There are two possible reasons for this result: (1) Some of the participants were working part-time; as such, they did not have enough time to study at home. (2) Assignments for the pre-departure seminars were in addition to many other assignments; therefore, they may have been considered an unnecessary burden. As such, the participants may not have felt like studying additional English outside the classroom.

Table 1. Mean, t-Value, and Significance on the Average Learning Hours (n=31)

Source	Mean		d.f	t-Value	Significance
	Sep	Jan			
1	3.45	3.58	30	-0.510	<i>n.s.</i>
2	3.16	3.84	30	-3.240	$p < .01$

1. How much time do you spend studying English on weekdays other than during class?

2. How much time do you spend studying English on weekends?

Table 2. Mean, t-Value, and Significance on the Use of Learning Places or Facilities (n=31)

Source	Mean		d.f	t-Value	Significance
	Sep	Jan			
1	2.26	2.58	30	-1.980	<i>n.s.</i>
2	1.16	2.23	30	-7.680	$p < .001$
3	1.81	1.81	30	0.000	<i>n.s.</i>
4	3.57	3.90	30	-1.510	<i>n.s.</i>

1. How often do you study English in the college library?

2. How often do you join "English lunch"?

3. How often do you use the "Writing Lab"?

4. How often do you use "CALL"?

Table 3. Mean, t-Value, and Significance on Learning Strategies

Source	Mean		d.f	t-Value	Significance
	Jan	Feb			
1	3.00	3.39	30	-1.680	<i>n.s.</i>
2	3.42	3.94	30	-2.794	$p < .01$
4	3.65	3.74	30	-0.571	<i>n.s.</i>
5	2.94	3.32	30	-1.715	$p < .10$

1. Learning English is one of my specific goals.

2. I try to find opportunities to use English as often as possible.

3. I try to find effective methods of studying English.

4. Improving my English skills is one of my specific goals (e.g., improving TOEIC or TOEFL scores).

5.2 Can-Do List

The second research question examined changes in the average Can-Do score. Participants were asked to respond using a Likert-type five-point scale: (1) I totally disagree, (2) I somewhat disagree, (3) I am undecided, (4) I mostly agree, (5) I totally agree. During the time period for this questionnaire survey, the average score for each of the four skill areas

was relatively low, and none of the four skill areas exhibited an average score above 4.00. After the trip, the highest score was 3.94, whereas none of areas had an average score below 2.50. Therefore, participants may have evaluated their English proficiency levels as “not good enough” but “not extremely low.”

The researcher used a One-way ANOVA for this research. Tables 4, 5, 6, and 7 display changes in the average Can-Do score. The main effect was found only in 7 out of 23 Can-Do statements. Of these seven statements, three statements were statements for the EIKEN Grade 2. Two of the seven statements were designed by the researcher to be equivalent to EIKEN Grade 2. The other two statements decreased significantly, which were statements for EIKEN Grade Pre-1, such as “1. Read different kinds of texts appropriately, adapting your reading style according to the type of text and purpose of reading” and “2. Understand the main points of lengthy texts” in the speaking section. In addition, after the trip, the highest score in each of the four skill areas was in EIKEN Grade 2, whereas the lowest score was in Grade Pre-1. Points of interest from this table, which showed significant differences, were “5. Explain familiar situations that occur in everyday life,” “7. Introduce your family, school life, and the area in which you live,” and “8. Introduce elements of Japanese culture and history” in the speaking section. Other noteworthy points were from “3. Describe the details of your memorable experiences” and “4. In simple terms, describe your family, school life, and the area in which you live” in the writing section. Regarding these two questions, the requirement to keep an English diary during their stay seemed to affect the outcomes. These results suggest that participants experienced improvements in their English skills in real-life situations, whereas the exposure provided by their stay and the experience of communicating in English had no, or a negative, impact on participants’ confidence in areas such as “1. Read different kinds of texts appropriately, adapting your reading style according to the type of text and purpose of reading” and “2. Understand the main points of lengthy texts,” which demanded a high proficiency in English.

Further, these results were supported by the findings outlined below. Table 8 illustrates the results of the questions in terms of an all-English environment, such as their recognition of all-English classes, English improvement, motivation, and expectations or suggestions for English classes in Japan. These items were rated using the five-point scale mentioned above. For these items, the researcher used the Chi-square test. As shown in the table, significant differences were found in all items. However, participants found that “9. I did not ask questions or ask for repetition in class earlier” or “10. I never expressed ideas or contributed to discussions in class.” The participants seemed to be overwhelmed by international students’ positive attitudes to using English without being conscious of their lack of similar skills, because making mistakes in English was not viewed negatively. Moreover, participants felt that “7. I would like to take all-English classes after I return to Japan” and “11. Language activities, such as expressing or discussing ideas should be employed in Japanese class.” Participants found it helpful to speak and listen to English and wanted to be more active in class.

Table 4. Can-Do Statements for the Reading Section: Mean, f-Value, and Significance (n=31)

Source	Mean			f-Value	Significance
	Sep	Jan	Feb		
1	2.94	2.87	2.55	2.857	p < .01
2	3.39	3.71	2.97	6.117	p < .01
3	3.29	3.68	3.39	2.348	<i>n.s.</i>
4	3.13	3.29	3.26	0.517	<i>n.s.</i>
5	3.48	3.32	3.52	0.588	<i>n.s.</i>

Can-do statements for the reading section:

1. (P1) Read different kinds of texts appropriately, adapting your reading style according to the type of text and purpose of reading (e.g., quickly skimming through a newspaper, reading a critical essay in detail, and reading a novel for pleasure).
2. (P1) Understand the main points of lengthy texts (e.g., required readings and materials for lectures and training courses).
3. (2) Understand an expository written for a general audience (e.g., guidebooks for travelers).
4. (2) Understand practical texts describing how to perform various activities (e.g., cookbooks, gardening books).
5. (2) Understand simple advertising flyers and pamphlets (e.g., product pricelists and information about sales).

Table 5. Can-Do Statements for the Listening Section: Mean, f-Value, and Significance (n=31)

Source	Mean			f-Value	Significance
	Sep	Jan	Feb		
1	3.34	3.48	3.48	0.191	<i>n.s.</i>
2	3.81	3.84	3.61	1.405	<i>n.s.</i>
3	3.52	3.65	3.61	0.386	<i>n.s.</i>
4	3.55	3.74	3.61	1.038	<i>n.s.</i>
5	3.39	3.42	3.19	1.168	<i>n.s.</i>

Can-do statements for the listening section:

1. (P1) Understand the main points when watching movies and TV shows.
2. (2) Understand the main points of classes conducted in English.
3. (2) Understand a simple description or explanation about a speaker's school.
4. (O) Understand lengthy talks with native speakers of English about daily lives.
5. (P1) Understand instructions and announcements when taking flights and using public transportation.

Table 6. Can-Do Statements for Speaking Section: Mean, f-Value, and Significance (n=31)

Source	Mean			f-value	Significance
	Sep	Jan	Feb		
1	2.90	2.94	3.03	1.086	<i>n.s.</i>
2	2.74	2.94	3.00	1.845	<i>n.s.</i>
3	2.84	3.10	3.19	0.386	<i>n.s.</i>
4	2.68	3.13	2.94	3.239	<i>n.s.</i>
5	3.16	3.48	3.68	5.988	p < .01
6	3.39	3.71	3.84	4.649	<i>n.s.</i>
7	3.29	3.81	3.77	3.369	p < .05
8	2.87	3.13	3.29	3.057	p < .01

Can-do statements for the speaking section:

1. (P1) Speak in detail about topics that you have researched.
2. (P1) Ask questions and express opinions about the content of lectures and presentations.
3. (2) Express opinions and ideas about daily lives.
4. (P1) Describe the plots of books you have read and films you have seen
5. (2) Explain familiar situations that occur in everyday life.
6. (2) Describe the details of memorable experiences (e.g., trips and special events).
7. (O) Introduce your family, school life, and the area in which you live.
8. (O) Introduce elements of Japanese culture and history.

Table 7. Can-Do Statements for the Writing Section: Mean, f-Value, and Significance (n=31)

Source	Mean			f-Value	Significance
	Sep	Jan	Feb		
1	3.23	3.55	3.48	2.069	<i>n.s.</i>
2	3.26	3.61	3.52	2.190	<i>n.s.</i>
3	3.61	3.87	3.94	2.517	p < .10
4	3.45	3.65	3.94	5.256	p < .01
5	3.07	3.29	3.42	2.195	<i>n.s.</i>

Can-do statements for the writing section:

1. (2) Describe your impressions of books you have read or films you have seen.
2. (0) Describe opinions and ideas about the content of lectures and presentations.
3. (2) Describe the details of any memorable experiences (e.g., special events and trips).
4. (2) Describe your family, school life, and the area where you live.
5. (P1) Write a description of Japanese culture and history.

Table 8. Mean, t-Value, and Significance on Participants' Adaptability (n=31)

Source	I totally disagree	I somewhat disagree	I am undecided	I mostly agree	I totally agree
1	1	0	5	5	20
2	0	2	3	19	7
3	0	3	5	16	7
4	1	2	4	12	12
5	1	0	1	6	23
6	1	0	3	7	20
7	1	0	3	6	21
8	2	5	4	8	12
9	1	1	3	4	22
10	1	0	5	7	18

1. I found All-English classes to be good.
2. My overall English ability improved through all-English classes.
3. My communication abilities, such as asking questions or requesting repetition, have improved.
4. I believe that I managed to follow the class even though my English was not perfect.
5. I would like to further improve my English.
6. I would like to take all-English classes after I return to Japan.
7. I like learning English more than I did before.
8. I felt that I was not used to asking questions or asking for repetition in class.
9. I felt that I was not used to expressing ideas or discussion in class.
10. Language activities, such as expressing ideas or having discussions, should be employed in Japanese classes.

5.3 Effectiveness of the pre-departure seminars

The fourth research question in this study examined the changes in participants' perceptions regarding the effectiveness of pre-departure seminars before, during, and after the trip. Participants were asked to answer using a Likert-type five-point scale: (1) I totally disagree, (2) I somewhat disagree, (3) I am undecided, (4) I mostly agree, and (5) I totally agree. The researcher utilized a paired t-test formula. Table 9 illustrates the changes in participants' attitudes toward the effectiveness of the pre-departure seminars before, during and after the trip. The results showed that the mean scores of all items decreased significantly, whereas the lowest score was 3.74, which was relatively high. There are three possible reasons for this result: (1) Regarding questions 1 and 2, some of the participants may have evaluated the presentation they made in the U.K. by relating it to a sense of accomplishment. This was the first time that the participants had given presentations in front of native English speakers or international students, which made them nervous. They found that they did not explain their work or answer questions well and that their presentations were unsuccessful

because the audience was unresponsive. Their sense of failure could be considered as having affected the result. (2) Concerning questions 3 and 4, participants were confused by the local British accent. As American English is taught in Japan, participants found British English quite unfamiliar. Therefore, they found the English lunch and online English conversation class, which was mainly conducted in American English, less effective than they expected. (3) For questions 5 and 6, though the mean scores of these questions after the trip were the highest and second-highest of all items, participants found them less effective – probably because the films or books they chose might have had no direct connection with their daily lives in the U.K. or their experiences.

Table 9. Mean, t-Value and Significance on Effectiveness of Pre-Departure Seminars

Source	Mean		d.f	t-Value	Significance
	Jan	Feb			
1	4.32	3.74	30	2.890	p < .10
2	4.29	3.81	30	2.706	p < .05
3	4.35	4.03	30	1.976	p < .10
4	4.29	3.84	30	2.718	p < .05
5	4.29	3.97	30	1.718	p < .10
6	4.39	4.06	30	2.061	p < .05

1. I felt that the presentation was effective for understanding and introducing Hokkaido and Japan in English.
2. I felt that the presentation was effective for introducing differences between the U.K. and Japan in English.
3. I thought that the “English lunch” was effective in helping to improve my English ability.
4. I thought that the “online English conversation classes” were effective in improving my English ability.
5. I found “reading books related to the U.K.” to be effective for learning the U.K.’s way of life and culture.
6. I found “watching films related to the U.K.” to be effective for learning the way of life and culture in the U.K. and becoming accustomed to British English.

5.4 English Lesson, Afternoon Tea Project/Hospitality Business, Industry Visit, and Cultural Adaptability

The last research question inspected changes in participants’ levels of satisfaction and adaptability to studying and staying overseas. Regarding participant satisfaction, the questionnaire included three items related to English lessons, the afternoon tea project/hospitality business, and industry visit to determine the difficulty level, enjoyment, and overall satisfaction. Participants responded to the questions using a Likert-type five-point scale; for difficulty level: (1) really difficult, (2) difficult, (3) moderate, (4) easy, or (5) very easy; for enjoyment: (1) really fun, (2) fun, (3) moderate, (4) boring, or (5) very boring; for overall satisfaction: (1) very satisfied, (2) satisfied, (3) neutral, (4) dissatisfied, or (5) very dissatisfied. The One-way ANOVA was used. As shown in Table 10, for main effects, the tendency of the main effect was found only for difficulty level. Bonferroni adjusted for multiple comparisons at the 0.05 level, which showed that the industry visits scored significantly higher than the afternoon tea project/hospitality business. There are two possible reasons for this result: (1) For English lessons, as mentioned above, participants found the overseas curriculum, which emphasized the importance of group discussion, challenging though placement was made according to proficiency. (2) For the industry visits, working professionals at the casino and airport used technical jargon in their speech, which was

delivered at their natural speed, making it difficult to understand. (3) For the afternoon tea project/hospitality business, participants understood more about these activities because there were a lot of practical aspects, such as flower arrangements or baking scones. For overall satisfaction, the highest and second-highest score among groups was 4.03 for English lessons and 3.97 for industry visits. Possibly, participants found these programs worthwhile and/or challenging.

Table 10. Mean, f-Value, and Significance on Satisfaction (n=31)

Source	Mean			f-Value	Significance
	1	2	3		
Level	3.52	3.03	3.52	2.953	p < .10
Enjoyment	3.52	3.03	3.52	0.022	<i>n.s.</i>
Overall satisfaction	4.03	3.81	3.97	1.466	<i>n.s.</i>

1. English lesson

2. Afternoon tea project/hospitality business

3. Industry visit

Using One-way ANOVA, changes in participants' adaptability were assessed. As shown in Table 11, the average score for each of items at the beginning of the pre-departure seminars was relatively low. The highest score was 3.52, and the lowest score was 2.84. It was found that the anxiety felt by students was related to having little or no experience in staying overseas and living in an all-English speaking environment; further, the anxiety may have been related to their poor communicative competency in English.

However, the average score for each of the items at the end of their time overseas showed a statistically significant increase. Many reasons were given for these results: (1) Participants had general opinions about their experience regarding living in an all-English speaking environment; many comments were made indicating improvement in English skills as the reason for a positive experience. Participants found that their English skills improved, and they were satisfied with the manner in which they communicated in the program. (2) Pre-departure seminars helped ease some of the participants' anxiety. Furthermore, participants had an opportunity to listen to local Japanese staff, who provided practical information on the important aspects of settling in, etiquette, and living in the U.K. The staff supported their stay throughout the program and addressed participants' questions, concerns, and health matters. Further, participants received a welcome email from their host families, which introduced the family members to the participants before the participants departed from Japan. (3) To stay connected, a private LINE group was created, with membership limited only to the students and key local staff. This group became the most convenient and useful means of staying connected with students and sharing information. As the students became avid LINE users, this social networking tool became more useful than their official university email accounts. Throughout the program, from pre-departure to conclusion, participants posted questions and comments and expressed their joys and frustrations. (4) The participants traveled as a group and not as individuals. Therefore, a limited number of situations may have required them to use English without relying on their classmates for help.

Table 11. Mean, t-Value, and Significance on Participants' Adaptability (n=31)

Source	Mean			f-Value	Significance
	Sep	Jan	Feb		
1	3.52	3.32	3.90	4.142	p < .05
2	2.84	3.42	3.77	13.452	p < .001
3	3.07	3.39	4.45	44.545	p < .001
4	2.97	3.00	3.42	3.214	p < .05
5	3.00	3.16	3.61	5.353	p < .01

1. I have the confidence to live in a foreign country and use English.

2. I think that communicating with the host family will go well.

3. I think that I will become familiar with the customs and food in the U.K.

4. I think that I will be able to follow English lessons in the U.K.

5. I think that I will be able to follow the "afternoon tea project" and "hospitality business" lessons in the U.K.

6. Conclusion

This paper discussed the effects of pre-departure seminars and a short-term overseas English program. The following points are suggested to improve and augment the positive impact of the seminar and overseas program in the future.

First, when considering the characteristics of short-term overseas study, pre-departure seminars should be conducted mainly in English, and language activities such as presentation and discussion should be employed. Implementing these suggestions would provide more opportunities for participants and increase their exposure to English by transforming classes into places where real-life English communication scenes could be practiced. This would effectively and efficiently improve participants' English skills along with their confidence levels prior to departure.

Second, to increase the effectiveness of the pre-departure seminars, future programs should be designed with a higher level of consistency and a more clearly outlined purpose. In addition, continuity of learning is a critical factor in students becoming successful English language learners. Therefore, the pre-departure seminars and overseas study program should be strongly linked by carefully designing the entire program to enable gradual progress. To achieve such progress, different measures will be adopted; for example, the faculties or international students at Hokusei Gakuen University will be invited to attend presentations and interact with the local students. To familiarize participants with the language of the country that they will visit, it is recommended that the online English conversation classes should be conducted by English-speaking teachers from the specific country that the participant will visit. As for the 'English essay', future participants will be required to read brochures or pamphlets in the fields of hospitality services or aviation hospitality to increase their interest and expand their technical vocabulary related to the target subject. To encourage better understanding of the subjects, lecturers or working professionals will be invited to attend one of the pre-departure seminars, provide lectures to participants and answer their specific questions.

Third, the researcher should have been involved with designing the content of the overseas study program. Many activities relating to hospitality, business or industry visits

were arranged by NCN staff members, some of which were not well organized. This could be one of the reasons that participants found the industry visit difficult. Though the majority of participants who studied overseas felt secure and greatly benefited from the faculty-led program, some concerns and complaints were raised, such as 'I could not follow the English lessons', 'I could not understand the strong accents of the other international students', 'I did not get along with classmates or my host family' and 'I wanted to make friends from other countries'. These comments may result from some students having an insufficient English proficiency level and a general lack of vocabulary. Moreover, given the size of the groups, some classes – for example, the 'Afternoon tea project' and 'hospitality business' – were conducted with only Hokusei students; therefore, participants may have used Japanese with their peers instead of speaking in English. This reflects the findings of Trentment (2013), who suggested that students studying in a group abroad tend to use their mother tongue more than the language of the country they are visiting. In the future, to increase participants' opportunities for practicing their English skills, the program will include more free time with host families and parties will be organized to help them meet various people in an informal, fun and authentic setting. Another recommendation entails that the students should have some free days to travel to nearby towns so as to increase their opportunities for encountering practical English and encourage them to use English themselves.

The researcher did not administer the questionnaire or the Can-Do list with students who did not join the program. Moreover, the participants in this study were all female students. Despite these weaknesses, this paper has provided statistical evidence that attending pre-departure seminars and studying abroad are valuable experiences for participants. Hopefully, more young EFL students will avail of opportunities to travel overseas, leading to improved language skill development and confidence with English.

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