

The Short-Term Overseas English Program of the Hokusei Gakuen University English Department: Strategies for Success

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[Abstract]

This paper presents keys for successful management techniques for short-term overseas English programs based on the author's eight year experience in chaperoning students of Hokusei Gakuen University to programs conducted in California. The discussion includes techniques for preparation and chaperoning, and new ways of assessing students' psychological and linguistic gains from their posts on social networking sites. It is crucial to see what really happens to the students during short-term programs and to ascertain how problems should be solved in reality. This paper also discusses a systematic problem, which prevents the intended globalization as manifested by the current Japanese government.

Introduction

The development of English language competence and English communicative skills is urgently demanded in Japan, and the expectation toward higher education to accomplish it has risen significantly. In such an environment, the term *Study Abroad* (SA) has become a buzzword in higher education to make schools look more attractive to students in a competitive market where the college-aged population is rapidly shrinking. The underlying assumption is that mere experience in an English speaking country will lead people to better language competence.

It might be true that SA experience will leave a huge impact on the development of foreign language skills, but simply living in an English speaking country does not automatically lead to fluency. It is true that the majority of fluent Japanese English speakers have experience living in an English speaking country; however, not all, who have experienced living in an English speaking country, are fluent English speakers. There are also many fluent

Key words : Short-term Overseas English Program, Study Abroad, Chaperone

speakers among those who have not lived abroad.

When it comes to short-term SA experiences, it might be hard for learners to conceive obvious linguistic gains, and it is even harder for researchers to measure them statistically. In fact, the gains are not only in language development, but also in the learners' mentality and worldview. Participants report in post-program surveys that their growth can be seen in many psychological areas such as self-awareness, personal views, acculturation, cultural tolerance in the host country and their native country, development of identity, development of leadership and a sense of cooperation. Such intangible advantages are even harder to show in numbers.

The key for success in managing a short-term overseas program is through knowing students' needs, and providing scaffolding support when students' cultural, psychological, and linguistic maturity is not yet ready to handle certain contexts.

In this paper, I would like to provide some tips for leading a successful short-term overseas program, which I have acquired through my research and while chaperoning students for the past 8 years at Hokusei Gakuen University (HGU). Such tips could be only applied to Japanese students because the optimistic learning environment varies accordingly with individual learner characteristics.

As a disclaimer, I would add that there are different needs in rapidly changing learning environments and society; thus, these tips are intended to be broad guidelines for practice.

Previous Studies

Early studies between the 1960s and 1990s have attempted to prove the effects of studying abroad by measuring the language gains quantitatively through test scores (Freed, as cited in Eguchi, 2010). However, the benefits of the study abroad experience are more widely available, and the language gains are also immeasurable by such test scores; nevertheless, many attempts were performed since the 1990s. Freed (1995) introduced the more complex measurements of the benefits of study abroad programs. Freed (1995) employed the "diversity of expertise" to scrutinize the "complex learning environment."

The effects of short-term programs are subtler than longer study abroad experiences; therefore, it is very difficult to quantify them as Coleman (2013) mentioned. Self-reporting is also employed as one of the qualitative research methods to ascertain the effects of study abroad programs, and Eguchi (2010) employs the post-program survey to show the effects of the short-term overseas program in San Diego.

Fenech (2013) reports different degrees in personal growth among short-term overseas study program participants in Australian universities, which were due to differences in language level, age, gender, traveling experiences, and ethnicity.

The post-program survey conducted in 2014 at HGU shows almost similar results to the past survey results from 2007 to 2013. Among 189 students, no one indicated zero benefits from the program, and all the students said there are at least some language gains. In addition to the obvious benefits from the study abroad programs, the HGU program only takes

students that are willing to participate in such overseas programs, and their cultural readiness and linguistic threshold were adequately sufficient.

However, from my observation on other students from different schools in Japan, there are clear differences in how much the students can take advantage of the experience. I have seen some students unwillingly taking classes and leaving negative effects on other students. Therefore, I am opposed to the idea of making overseas experience mandatory or as a prerequisite for graduation. It is more desirable to create an environment where all the students can study abroad either for short-term or long term out of choice and not obligation.

History of Short-term Overseas Program at HGU

The English Department of Hokusei Gakuen University has been offering 4 credits to students for their participation in a 4-week English program held by one of University of California's Extension Programs: The University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB) Extension in 2007, at the University of California San Diego (UCSD) Extension in 2008-2011, and most currently, at the University of California Davis (UC Davis) in 2012-2014. The move from Santa Barbara to San Diego was because of the English program closure of the UCSB Extension, and the move from San Diego to Davis was due to time conflict between the final test week of the first semester and the beginning of the summer program in the UCSD extension.

The total number of participants since the beginning of the program was 189. This overseas program has played an important role in HGU's efforts to globalize education alongside other exchange programs with partner universities in the US, UK, Canada, Spain, Indonesia, Philippines, and Switzerland.

I have been chaperoning the participants since the program began, (for the whole four weeks in 2007-2009 and for the first 10 days in 2010-2014) and observed its huge impact on students in terms language gains and personal growth. This has been consistently demonstrated in post-program questionnaires.

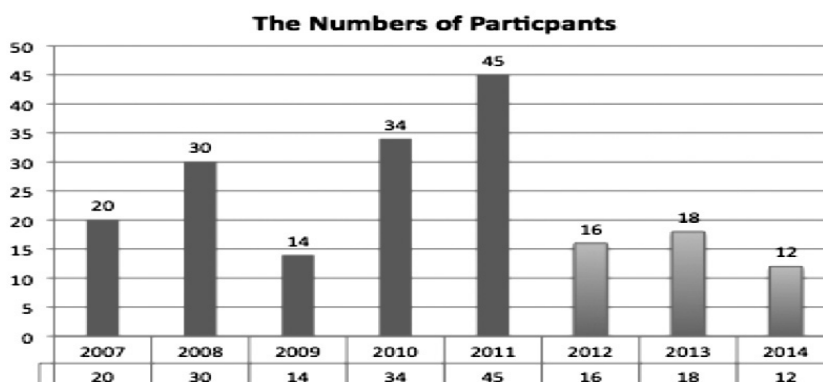


Figure 1. The numbers of the participants each year

The HGU program has provided a chaperone from one of the faculty members (so far, I have been in charge of the job), who accompanies the students.

The first year was the most challenging because I did not know what the students needed, and how Japanese college students would think and behave. From my point of view, I treated them as grown-ups and left them alone, while concentrating on more administrative work rather than providing personalized student support. However, after I had received some harsh criticisms from some students in the post-program survey, I changed my roles and attitudes toward the students. I started behaving more like a teacher, a tour guide, and more like an older brother. This meant that I intervened at certain moments to help optimize their learning and make their stay more comfortable.

The first three years, from 2007 to 2009, a chaperone stayed with the students throughout the one-month program. Since 2010, a chaperone stayed on the program site for the first ten days only. According to the post program survey, the largest majority of the participants said that the first 10 days is the most appropriate length of time for chaperoning since most problems happen during the first week. After 10 days with the chaperone gone, support is provided through email or Facebook and Line correspondence; hence, students are given the opportunity to become more independent, something that happens more effectively after the initial support from a chaperone.

The participant number grew when the program was conducted in San Diego. In 2009, it suddenly dropped because of the swine flue endemic and San Diego's proximity to Mexico where the contagion spread. I was advised to cancel the whole program because other schools were criticized harshly by the media for bringing the flu to Japan. Students and their parents were too afraid to join the program that year; however, in the following year, the participation of students increased again.

After the partnership shifted to Davis, the number of participant dropped dramatically. There are some factors that made San Diego a popular choice for students. One of the biggest factors was the fact that there were three housing options; (a) on-campus housing, (b) off-campus housing, and (c) homestay, and the total cost was different according to their choice. Therefore, students could choose their accommodation according to their preferences.

Another factor that influenced the decline in participation lies in the disproportion of the participant nationalities in the program in Davis. The majority of the students in Davis, roughly about more than 95%, are Japanese because of the common conditions imposed upon Japanese schools in the choice of summer overseas program. I will discuss this later in this paper.

Because so many Japanese schools are sending their students to Davis now, UC Davis has capped the number of students that a school can send at 15. Because there were only 12 students in 2014, this did not become a serious problem. For this reason, it is a necessity to diversify the programs and provide several options of the places students can choose. In this regard, a new program will start in 2016 where students will be able to choose a commercially available program to earn two credits for submitting a report afterwards.

Both internationality and practical English education are the selling points of the HGU English department; hence, continuous efforts will be made to maintain its reputation and popularity among prospective students

Techniques for Successful Management

Preparation and Problem Solving: Collaboration with Trustworthy Agents

One of the keys for successful management of a short-term overseas program is to work collaboratively with trustworthy agents. I have been working in cooperation with the Hokusei Gakuen University Coop (HGU Coop) and the Ryugaku Journal[®]. Hokusei Gakuen University Coop has been working as a travel agent, which collects applications, books airplane tickets, and helps students apply for US student visa and Electronic System for Travel Authorization (ESTA). In addition, the coop works as a liaison between the Ryugaku Journal[®] and me occasionally on matters concerning the contract. However, I contact the company directly when the program is in progress.

Ryugaku Journal[®] is the Japanese biggest company on the study abroad business, and it has a very large network of English schools in the world. The Ryugaku Journal[®] works as the master agent handling all the other local agents in the program sites including the schools and housing agents. Although I had also direct contact with the school director and program coordinator, the Ryugaku Journal[®] liaises with the school and me in matters concerning the contract. The decision that I have to make on the agent selection is crucial in producing the best solution when problems arise.

The whole program could be managed with only the help of these two agents; however, I do contact the director and the program coordinators, housing agents and home-stay providers when it is necessary. Although it is easier to blame your agents for any problem, which I have often witnessed, it does not encourage proactive collaboration in solving the problems.

Best Practices for Preparation

In the preparation stage, there are some tips for success. The countless preparatory tasks include providing sufficient information on the classes, activities, and towns. Planning a good program itinerary and creating a useful program guidebook are among the tasks. Moreover, I have even made a flowchart of emergency contacts to convince the school administration to allow me to implement the program in 2009, the year of the swine flu pandemic. However, these are what everybody does for a group trip. The real tips are the following.

There are some keys in the preparation stage that I would like to itemize here.

- Sharing responsibilities
- Managing expectations
- Presenting reality
- Forming a cohesive group

In the orientation meeting, or explanation meeting, it is very important to convince the

students that it is a collaborative work to make the program successful. There are many contingent problems that may happen at any stage of the program management and are unforeseeable by the chaperone. Therefore, it is important to create a partnership for success with the students.

Studying abroad is one of the biggest dreams for the students who are studying English. It is natural for them to have very high expectations, and I think such expectations should be met. However, their expectations are sometimes unrealistic, and it is important to manage them beforehand. One expectation is concerning the amount of language input and language improvement. As Coleman mentions (2013), many believe that staying in an English speaking country will bring about language improvement automatically, and when the expected outcome is not met, it can lead to great disappointment.

For example, many students say that they do not want to see any Japanese to be immersed into an “English only” environment. I have seen Japanese students getting disappointed, complaining that there are so many Japanese and that they are annoying. Such attitude does more harm than good. It is very important to acknowledge that they are also one of such Japanese people who are studying abroad. If the students get disappointed each time they see a Japanese person, their whole trip would be disappointing. Therefore, it is important to let them acknowledge there will be many Japanese students, and it is a waste of time if they reject other Japanese people at the beginning of the program, which they often do. This is because after spending some time together, all the Japanese students would start accepting each other as friends. By doing so students can accept typical Japanese behaviors, such as taking many pictures or walking in a group, that are often ridiculed by Japanese themselves. Students can behave confidently if they think what they are doing is not wrong, and that is what everybody does in a new place.

It is also important to form a cohesive group among the students of HGU. According to my experience in the first few years, I learned that all the students would get along with each other very well and accept each other as friends so intimately as if they were family members at the end of the whole program. Therefore, I would say in the orientation meeting itself that since everybody will end up liking each other so much at the end, they should start accepting each other even before the departure. In reality, the students do not behave as per my advice before departure. However, the students would remember what I have said, and during their stay, they would start realizing what I meant. Shortly after their arrival, they behaved well as a group and helped each other when they needed others' help. By doing so, students learn to be independent from a chaperone, and find ways to solving their problems. Additionally they also learn to ask for help when it is necessary at the same time.

There is a debate on the more effective method: to let students struggle in adapting and solving their problems, or to prepare them in advance of possible challenges so that they can focus more on their productive learning experiences. I am largely in favor of the latter, especially for short-term programs. Students choose the program prepared by the school because it is the first time for them traveling abroad with a chaperone, who would take care

of them. There are so many things that students cannot solve by themselves because of their lack of language competence and knowledge, especially in the early stages. In addition, Japanese students tend to be passive, tolerating inconveniences by remaining quiet or sharing problems with their inner circle without seeking a solution. Therefore, it is important for a chaperone to establish good relationships and listen to the students' needs and problems. Problems usually tend to become bigger when they are left unsolved before they become unbearable.

However, many problems can be solved by the students themselves. It is a chaperone's job to determine whether they can help themselves or they would need assistance. The post program survey shows that students were more appreciative when they learned how to solve problems rather than having their problems solved by a chaperone.

Best Practices for Chaperoning

There are many things that I do for my students to make their stay easier, giving them more independence so that they can optimize their learning experiences. I take care of some practical matters so that students are adequately oriented. I also ensure that they have effective lines of communications.

Upon arrival, I give students a campus tour, and a tour of Sacramento and San Francisco, rent telephones and bikes, consult with each participant and talk to the director and program coordinators, contact the host-family provider and so on. In the past, students sometimes would lose their personal effects, such as smart phones, passport (twice), wallets, etc., and contacting the local police or the Japanese embassy (consulate) were the jobs I did. Students appreciate the campus tour or town tour according to the post-program survey. Understanding local transportation methods or understanding the location of the campus and town facilities led them to more satisfaction. One student mentioned that they could go to many places even after I have returned to Japan, and they did what other students from different schools did not experience in that short time period.

Communication with Students

The meanings, impacts, and effects of the study abroad program have changed in line with social or technological advancement. Studies on study abroad programs should be modified by taking such changes into consideration (Coleman, 2013).

Since 2008, I have asked all the students to purchase a cheap mobile telephone from a local telephone shop, such as Radio Shack or Verizon and a call plan with international calling services and unlimited free domestic calls for a month. It made communication with each other easier among members of the HGU group. In Davis, we rented a phone for \$90 from a host family provider. They were delivered on our arrival in UC Davis, and it is especially important to have a phone on the first day, when students staying with a host family commuted to the school by themselves for the first time. Nevertheless, having the means to contact their chaperone in the event of a crisis or emergency makes it a lot easier.

The biggest changes I went through from 2007 to 2014 are the spread of Wi-Fi and smart phones. These days, it is free to contact people around the world for any length of time if there is Wi-Fi access and the gadget to use it. In 2007, Wi-Fi technology was already available, but the main machine to access to it was by computers. Therefore, there was a difference in the frequency of using Wi-Fi, and it was not so convenient yet. In 2013 in Davis, although almost all the students took their own mobile computers, Wi-Fi access was not readily available especially in a home-stay environment.

I added a question in the post-program survey in 2014 to ask whether it is necessary to have a mobile phone even when Wi-Fi is so widely available, and everybody has a smart phone. Their response was positive on mobile phones. The reason was that there should be Wi-Fi access for both parties when they need immediate contact, and there are many cases when they needed immediate contact. Therefore, the Line or Facebook contact is very convenient when they are at home with a stable Wi-Fi access; nonetheless, the mobile telephone excels it in the case of emergency.

Information Provision

There are many ways to provide information, and this is one of the most important elements for successful management. Previously, I used the Bulletin Board System (BBS) function of the Learning Management System (LMS) to provide information and Facebook. Since 2014, I have added Line to the list. Line is more convenient to contact a large number of people by using its group function. Alternatively, Facebook is more convenient in providing pre-prepared information for a longer time period due to its page display layout. I stopped using the LMS in 2014, because students missed the information quite often because they have to log into the system using an ID and password each time, and it is a little troublesome for them to do so. Facebook and Line can remain logged in, and there would be an alert each time a new message arrives.



Image 1 : An example of a Facebook post



Image 2 : An example of a Line post

I used more Line for informal correspondence with the students while the students used it for many purposes. Facebook was used for more official announcement so that no one would miss the important posts. There are different conveniences in each application, and using both in addition to telephone conversations will create more comprehensive communication channels. I received the fewest number of telephone calls in 2014 than previous years, thanks to the wider availability of Wi-Fi access.

According to the host family provider, they make it a requirement to have wireless Wi-Fi access at the home environment from 2014. Inside the campus of UC Davis, Wi-Fi access is given to all the students with an ID and password, and there was no complaint in 2014 though there were few in 2013, which became a major challenge for me. However, the environment is getting better. Regardless of the argument on whether it is good for the students or not, Wi-Fi has become a prerequisite for college students and others.

It is crucial that information is disseminated equally to all participants in a timely manner. A social networking site (SNS) is an essential tool for a chaperone for a successful program management. With a telephone for emergency, constant communication and quick response are essential. They worked nicely after I went back to Japan too. Students asked me for advice through Line or Facebook, and I asked them to update me on their experiences by sharing pictures.

Dealing with Home-Stay Issues

Based on my experience staying with the participants, and observing students from different schools in Japan, problems concerning host-families can occur and can range from minor cultural misunderstandings to serious situations involving sexual harassment. The chaperone plays a crucial role in supporting students as they navigate through these homestay issues.

Many students chose home-stay accommodations, expecting more exposure to the American culture, language input, and interaction. Japanese tend to think that they will be treated in the same way that Japanese families would accept foreigners in Japan. Sometimes their high expectations can be met, but sometimes they cannot. Here are some tips to make their stay more satisfactory and at least acceptable.

First, it is important to let them choose voluntarily the types of accommodations by providing the pros and cons of each accommodation type. Even though there are good host-families, sometimes, some families do not provide what is expected of them. For these reasons, it is not appropriate for me to recommend any accommodation type. However, I would invite the participants from the previous years to talk about their experience.

Furthermore, you can make the students' home-stay accommodation more comfortable by dealing with the agent of the host-families. First, it is better not to put too many requirements in the home-stay environment other than the ones in relation to health problems, such as animal, food, or smoking allergy. Other requirements mean something more in relation to the cultural and linguistic background of the family, and can create too many limitations.

These could include requirements such as the host-family should be an American family, not immigrants from different countries, or something related to the current home environment such as no other Japanese roommate to avoid them talking to each other in Japanese. The intention of putting such requirements is very understandable. Some schools are also trying to maximize on home-stay benefits for optimal language and cultural learning. Measures are taken to ensure students acculturate themselves through their surrogate American family in an authentic American environment.

This way of restricting home-stay environment may stem from the myths about the language learning and the stereotypical images on American family and culture. If these were the expectations of the Japanese students, their expectations would certainly not be met. There are many types of American families. For example, the family hierarchy may not be traditionally patriarchal, or the family is the first generation of immigrants that still practice their native culture and language

The more requirements are added, the more difficult it is to find families that match the criteria. If such requirement should be met, the number of the host-family available will be very small. Because so many Japanese students go to Davis, or San Diego, there is already a shortage of host families, and such requirements would worsen the situation. I have witnessed many students from different schools complaining about their host-families because the host-families did not match the descriptions they were given before they departed from Japan.

The quality of the family is not only determined by the home environment but also by how much they care about the students, and how many friendly interactions they are willing to initiate with the students. It is much better to have a wider choice of host-families. The information on the quality of host-families is collected by the agent, and they would know which family has had good evaluation and who did not. If there are more host-families available than there are students, host-families can be chosen from the top of the list. However, there are more students than there are good families, so much so that more host-families are chosen from the bottom. It is also important to report problems, if any, so that the agent can know if any host family causes problems.

If there are any problems with the host-family, it is usually made known at the very beginning of their stay. The presence of a chaperone makes it easier to solve such problems. There will be problems due to the cultural differences between Japan and America, but some problems should be solved immediately. It is not difficult to detect these problems by consulting with the students and solving the problems: many of such problems can be solved by informing the family about the students' complaints. Additionally, providing some language training to the students to convey their complaints in an appropriate language that would not offend the family can be a solution.

Sometimes, it is necessary to contact the agents, when the complaints concern contract violations between the agent and the host-family. Such problems pertain to the family's language use or hygiene problems, which are too delicate for the students to address directly to the family. Students hesitate to do so because they think it damages the family's reputation,

but it is much easier than it looks. The agents would know how to manage delicate situations with the host-families; consequently, students need to understand that some problems can be easily solved by informing the agents

In the last two years, I helped two students from different schools in Japan, who had experienced serious problems with their host-families. The school did not send any chaperone, and the complaints were conveyed through email or telephone to the agents or their school by the students themselves or a friend of the troubled students.

The problems may sometimes appear bigger than they actually are when they are handled at a remote place. The reverse can be true as well. Sometimes, the seriousness is not conveyed clearly or correctly. In particular, when the information is indirectly conveyed to the school or agent in Japan, the problems will become much bigger, and they are sometimes solved in a less desirable manner for the students. I am convinced that the presence of a chaperone in a large group smoothens the transition and makes the students more satisfied.

There was a problem in the HGU group in 2014 too where one female student had trouble with the host-family in relation to the fee she had to pay to them. The host-family asked her an extra one dollar per day, totaling 30 dollars. She reported it to me soon, and I told her not to pay more than she was told to. Subsequently, I contacted my agent, and the problem was solved on the second day. However, her family in Japan heard that she had trouble with her host-family on the first day through Line, and demanded that I change the host-family. As I was aware of the actual situation at that time, I could confidently explain to the student as well as her parents on how I had solved the problem. The parents understood the situation accurately, and no complaint was made afterwards. If it had been handled by somebody who was not with the student, the problems could have escalated. These incidents justify the sending of a chaperone with the participants.

Documenting the Student Learning Experience: New Findings of SNS

There was an interesting finding in the use of SNS. Some students wrote essays posted on their Facebook wall. It was a very good source of information to know how their minds and thoughts have changed and progressed. After reading their posted essays, I requested for their permission to edit their posts so that the essay would become more publishable. It is not an assignment, so their honest feelings were clearly expressed. Moreover, I believe my attitude toward sharing information with others motivated them to write such essays.

Day 16 :

Today, I spent a whole day in my home-stay house. After dinner, I talked with my host father and the other housemate, Min. We talked about history, politics, language, education, and so on. It was hard for me to talk about such topics, but it was very interesting. I'd never thought about why almost all Japanese would make a peace sign in front of a camera.

I really feel that English and Chinese pronunciations are very different from Japanese, and they are very difficult too. I think the English 'r' sound is the most difficult to pronounce.

In addition, when I say, "Hot-Dog" in the typical way of Japanese Katakana English, which sounds like [Hotto Dokku], the American people do not understand what I have said. "Hot-dog" is used even in Japanese as a borrowed word from English, but something has changed in the transition process. It was interesting!

In addition, I was amazed at the American educational system. They have more freedom than Japanese students do. Students have more time to be engaged in some activities after school. I think it's better. My host father said that some Japanese students like me, around 20 years old, behave like a 13- or 14-year-old kid. Japanese or students from some countries don't have enough time to behave like a kid in their childhood. That is why I may still behave like that, he said. It is a very interesting analysis, and I agreed with him.

I have too many things I have to do in Japan. I have no time to challenge something new. It's terrible. I want to spend more time challenging many things even after going back to Japan. Learning in a different culture is so stimulating for me.



Image 3 : An example of a Facebook post

As demonstrated in their essays, their cultural, linguistic, and social awareness as well as their hardship and happiness were well expressed, and I could not have known these many details from the post-program surveys done in the past.

There was a fact worth noticing, which was confessed by two of such students, who posted the criticisms they received from their friends at college.

Some people said to me, "What can you do in a month? It is impossible to change something in such a short time. Don't you know it is just a trip?" They

were wrong. Such people don't know what we can do in a month and its effects. I know that there is a big difference between such people and me now. It is a matter of the person whether a month will make a big difference or not. So I don't care what others say anymore.

Another student wrote:

Before I left Japan, some of my friends ridiculed me, saying only 4 weeks is not "study abroad, just for fun."

It is known by reading this kind of essay that the participants also have high expectations and uncertainties about the benefits they can derive from the short-term study abroad program. It is a chaperone's job to eliminate their uncertainties and anxieties, and let them learn how to maximize on the opportunities. I believe that students are very uncertain of what would make them appear strange to the local people, and what is cool or not. They would try not to do what typically Japanese people are stereotyped to do, such as taking photos everywhere or flock together all the time.

However, teaching students to avoid certain behaviors on the presumption that these behaviors would make them look odd is counterproductive. However, telling them that behavior uncertainty and non-conformity because they are newcomers is normal would empower them to be more confident. This includes enabling them not to focus too much on what others think of them. Therefore, telling them what they should do, rather than what they should not do is more productive. It is all right for them to ask for direction. It is all right to say that they are in trouble. It is all right to say that they do not understand. It is all right to say that they do not know. Those are very important lessons for Japanese students.

It might be a chaperone's job to be a partner in this kind of short-term program. By sharing information, experience, and feelings, a chaperone can learn more about the participants, and contribute more to their learning that way. I have learned this by spending a lot of time, sharing many things, going to many places, and using SNS.

Systematic Problem

As I mentioned briefly in the history of the short-term overseas problem at HGU, the move from San Diego to Davis was due to the time conflict between the final test week of the first semester at HGU and the start of the summer program in San Diego. UCSD's program used to start on the last Monday of July and in the last two years, the first Monday of August. Taking the example of 2013, the test week was until August 7th while the UCSD's program started on August 5th. The program in Davis started on August 9th. When we attended the UCSD extension's 4-week program, students did not take the tests conducted during the test week, and took make-up tests after the program completion with special permission.

The summer break for college students used to be much longer than now. The strict enforcement of the 15 class-time meetings plus test weeks (two additional weeks) by the

Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) pushes the end of first semester to the first week or more of August. It seems that universities and colleges seem to have a similar academic calendar all over Japan. When the first semester ends at the end of the first week of August, it is very difficult to find four-week short-term overseas programs in the US.

UC Davis extension begins on the first Friday of August, and it is the only school that starts that late. This is why so many schools in Japan send their students to UC Davis extension for the short-term program, and the ratio of Japanese students to the students from different countries is very high.

From my impression, more than 95% of the participants were from Japan. In 2013, I saw only Japanese students in the program with a few exceptions, so UC Davis limited the number of the students each Japanese school could send to 15. Because of this policy, the total number of Japanese students was smaller in 2014, but the majority of the students were still Japanese.

If globalization of education and human resources is one of the important government policies, I sincerely hope that this situation will be taken into serious consideration. A long-term study abroad is very expensive, and not many students can afford that. Nevertheless, the demand for short-term overseas experience is expanding, and the number of students, who want to experience studying abroad, is constantly increasing. If the program they participate in has only Japanese students, the interaction with international students from different countries will be less. Something should be done to solve this systematic problem, which is clearly preventing the globalization of human resources in Japan.

It is counter-productive to have such a gap between the intention of policy makers and the reality. However, such a systematic problem cannot be solved easily, and schools should be more flexible in finding solutions to provide more opportunities for students to experience studying abroad. It is very difficult for a large group to have a program together because of the tight schedule and its regulations. It might be a more realistic solution if the individual student arranges and executes his/her study abroad plan with some endorsement and support from the school.

Conclusion

Globalization has become a keyword to describe the world trend and the direction Japan would take in the future. According to the data presented by Ryugaku Journal[®], over 200,000 Japanese students experienced either a long-term or short-term study abroad program in 2012.

It is very important to understand how Japanese students these days can make the most of their overseas experience along with the social changes and technological advancement. People who had experienced studying abroad many years ago might say that being isolated from other Japanese, being immersed in a foreign culture, and having difficulties make students stronger, and learning takes place.

It is very easy to imagine how different the experience would be 50, 35, or 20 years ago,

which is when I experienced living in the USA, compared to these present times. It might have been very difficult to contact people in the homeland from foreign countries 50 years ago. When I was studying in Indiana, it was the beginning of the Internet, but using the landline telephone was the main communication method. At that time, I talked only with my family members, mainly my mother, monthly or fortnightly. Moreover, I did not contact any friends during my two years abroad.

However, these days, the Internet has eased the establishment of contact with people all over the world at little or no cost, and it seems rather difficult to create a language immersion of the target language. It takes a strong will to be in a language environment where students do not use Japanese.

Many things have changed, and young people are very different in many aspects from the previous generations. In addition, every student is different. Such changes should be taken seriously to optimize the learning environment and maximize their learning. It is true that there can be gaps between the intended benefits and the consequences in reality if managed remotely.

In this paper, based on my 8 years of experience chaperoning students in overseas language program, I presented some managerial tips for a successful short-term overseas language program. It is very important to see what really happens during the short-term program and to ascertain how problems should be solved in reality.

You have to do many things to maximize the effects of the program and optimize the students' learning environment. The key for success in planning and managing the program is communication with students. I conducted four orientation meetings and explained a great many details, but students tend to take them with a *laissez-faire* attitude because nothing is real until they have first-hand experience. Thus, by having effective means of communication such as Facebook or Line, or a telephone on-site, students can be provided the necessary and pertinent information in real time to help them manage or solve their problems at hand.

No matter how much the management of short-term overseas program are learned, the benefits of SA experience cannot be fully taken advantage of if students do not have sufficient break periods. This paper suggests that there is a gap between governmental policymaking and the reality in relation to the education globalization in Japan. College students now have a shorter summer break than before, and the Japanese academic calendar is not compatible to the ones in other countries. It should be taken into serious consideration if globalization is to be successful in the future.

It seems obvious that studying abroad will bring many benefits individually and nationally as well. However, to the evolving nature of education, from the system to its students, SA experiences are not always beneficial. It is utmost priority to enhance the students' learning readiness in a new learning environment. I hope that opportunities are always available for everybody, and the authorities and education institutions, such as MEXT and the school administrations understand how to maximize the potential benefits of study abroad experiences.

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