

## Effects of the short term overseas study on English learning

— Three weeks of study in Australia —

短期海外研修の英語学習への影響

—三週間のオーストラリア研修—

Key words: overseas study, motivation, learning

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### 1. Introduction

Seventeen Japanese high school students took part in the study program in Australia during the summer vacation. This program was planned by Fukui-ken International Understanding Association, toured by ISA(International Student Adviser's of Japan) and programmed by AIU(Australian Institute of International Understanding). The Study Center was Ryan Catholic Community School in Townsville, Queensland. The students took classes Monday through Friday with teachers who mastered E.S.L. They also had some interaction with the students of Ryan School. On Saturdays and Sundays they spent all day with their host family, with one student per host family. So while they were on the study program they were continuously speaking with native speakers of English, except at the morning gathering and during the lunch break when the Japanese students met together. Here in this research paper, I will report the effects on English learning through three weeks of study in Australia.

### 2. The purpose of the research

In language learning, it is considered to be a great motivation and very effective if students take lessons at school as well as experience a home stay in an overseas program. This kind of study, different from the sightseeing tour, improves listening and speaking abilities greatly and gives an effective influence on language learning.

Last summer, four students from our school took part in this study program in Australia. Through analysing data, I want to clarify what skills will be improved and how the study program effects English learning.

### 3. Experiments

(1) Subjects: Eight tenth graders of Sabae Senior High School

(Four participants and four non-participants)

(2) Term: Three weeks between August 2 and 22.

(3) Hypotheses:

Overseas study can improve the learner's

1) listening ability

2) speaking ability and attitude toward it

3) positive attitude toward language learning on the whole

(4) Ways of analysis: [Hatch(1982), Naito(1997)]

t-test (to compare two means)

standard deviation (to show distribution) and others

(5) Tests used:

Written tests

AAT = Academic ability test (100)

MT = Mock test (100)

ST = Summer test (100)

STEP = Test by the Society for Testing English Proficiency (70)

CRWT = Cloze(50)+Reading(25)+Writing(25) test (100)

Listening test

HT.C = Hoso test C (100)

HT.D = Hoso test D (100)

Speaking test

Comics = Four blocks in one comic strip from the newspaper

Ways of testing: [Hints from Kodera *et al.* (1995)]

I let the students think about the story of the comic strip (with pictures only) for three minutes and then asked them to explain the story. I transcribed the recorded material from the tape and counted the number of words and sentences used. I used a stopwatch to measure the length of the talk, which is shown in seconds. Length of talking measurements do not include long breaks in speech or repeated phrases.

Listening and speaking tests

Conversation with the ALT

RS/SP(10) = Response and speaking

GR(10) = Grammar

PR(10) = Pronunciation (including suprasegmental features)

TL(30) = Total of the items above

Ways of testing:

The ALT greeted the students and gave them questions about school, studies, clubs and others.

(6) Results and analysis (A & E = boys ; B, C, D, F, G & H = girls)

Experimental group = The group of students who took part in the overseas program.

Control group = The group of students who did not take part in the overseas program.

Table 1

Pre-overseas study (End of July)

Experimental group	study (End of July)		HT.		COMICS		WHOLE LENGTH	CONV. WITH ALT			TL
	AATI	MT	C	D	WORDS	STNCS		RS/SP	GR	PR	
A	82	46	95	90	7	2	5	4	6	8	18
B	71	33	90	58	1	1	1	4	6	6	16

C	68	46	85	90	21	5	18	6	4	4	14
D	71	46	95	95	57	11	43	7	8	8	23
TOTAL	292	171	365	333	86	19	67	21	24	26	71
MEAN	73.0	42.8	91.3	83.3	21.5	4.8	16.8	5.3	6.0	6.5	17.8
SD	5.3	5.6	4.1	14.7	21.7	3.9	16.4	1.3	1.4	1.7	3.3

Control group		HT.		COMICS		WHOLE	CONV. WITH ALT			TL	
	AAT1	MT	C	D	WORDS	STNCS	LENGTH	RS/SP	GR	PR	
E	84	35	90	100	32	7	24	4	9	9	22
F	64	39	90	58	16	6	11	5	6	6	17
G	68	33	100	90	32	8	24	6	6	8	20
H	75	38	85	80	7	2	5	6	8	9	23
TOTAL	291	145	365	328	87	23	64	21	29	32	82
MEAN	72.8	36.3	91.3	82.0	21.3	5.8	16.0	5.3	7.3	8.0	20.5
SD	7.6	2.4	5.4	15.6	10.7	2.3	8.3	0.8	1.3	1.2	2.3

t-TEST

AAT 1	p<1	CONVERSATION WITH ALT	
MT	p<0.2	RESPONSE & SPEAKING	p<1
HT. C	p<1	GRAMMAR	p<0.3
HT. D	p<1	PRONUNCIATION	p<0.3
COMICS		TOTAL	p<0.3
WORDS	p<1		
SENTENCES	p<0.8		
WHOLE LENGTH	p<1		

Table 2

Post-overseas study (Beginning of September)

Experimental group		HT.		COMICS		WHOLE	CONV. WITH ALT			TL	
	AAT1	MT	C	D	WORDS	STNCS	LENGTH	RS/SP	GR	PR	
A	69	82	95	51	43	11	45	7	7	8	22
B	55	63	95	40	43	10	18	9	7	8	24
C	50	64	90	42	44	12	41	10	6	7	23
D	68	74	100	48	71	15	61	10	9	8	27
TOTAL	242	283	380	181	201	48	195	36	29	31	96
MEAN	60.5	70.8	95.0	45.3	50.3	12.0	48.8	9.0	7.3	7.8	24.0
SD	8.2	7.8	3.5	4.4	12.0	1.9	7.5	1.2	1.1	0.4	1.9

Control group		HT.		COMICS		WHOLE	CONV. WITH ALT			TL	
	AAT1	MT	C	D	WORDS	STNCS	LENGTH	RS/SP	GR	PR	
E	63	71	90	33	9	3	9	4	8	8	20
F	45	52	90	34	26	10	21	5	6	7	18
G	52	69	90	38	14	5	13	6	8	8	22
H	64	87	85	42	18	5	13	6	7	7	20
TOTAL	224	279	355	147	67	23	56	21	29	30	80
MEAN	56.0	69.8	88.8	36.8	16.8	5.8	14.0	5.3	7.3	7.5	20.0
SD	7.9	12.4	2.2	3.6	6.2	2.6	4.4	0.8	0.8	0.5	1.4

t-TEST

AAT 2	p<0.6	CONVERSATION WITH ALT	
SUMMER TEST	p<1	RESPONSE & SPEAKING	**p<0.004
HT. C	*p<0.05	GRAMMAR	p<1
HT. D	*p<0.05	PRONUNCIATION	p<0.5
COMICS		TOTAL	*p<0.03
WORDS	**p<0.005		
SENTENCES	*p<0.02		
WHOLE LENGTH	***p<0.001		

Table 3

One &amp; a half months later

(Middle of October)

Experimental group

	Written	Listening	Total (70)
A	33	17	50 ○
B	19	16	35
C	20	12	32
D	24	17	41 ○
TOTAL	96	62	158
MEAN	24.0	15.5	39.5
SD	5.5	2.1	6.9

English proficiency test

-Pre-second grade

Control group

	Written	Listening	Total (70)
E	19	8	27
F	20	8	28
G	21	8	29
H	23	11	34
TOTAL	83	35	118
MEAN	20.8	8.8	29.5
SD	1.5	1.3	2.7

t-TEST

Written p<0.5 Total \*p<0.05 ○ Passed  
 Listening \*\*p<0.004

Table 4

Two &amp; a half months later (Middle of November) CRWT

Experimental group

	Cloze (50)	Reading (25)	Writing (25)	Total (100)
A	34	25	10	69
B	34	15	10	59
C	20	25	15	60
D	34	25	10	69
TOTAL	122	90	45	257
MEAN	30.5	22.5	11.3	64.3
SD	6.1	4.3	2.2	4.8

Control group

	Cloze (50)	Reading (25)	Writing (25)	Total (100)
E	24	25	10	59
F	14	15	5	34
G	16	20	10	46
H	36	15	5	56
TOTAL	90	75	30	195
MEAN	22.5	18.8	7.5	48.8
SD	8.6	4.1	2.5	9.8

t-TEST

Cloze p<0.3 Total \*p<0.05  
 Reading p<0.4  
 Writing \*p<0.1

## 4. Discussion

I gave the students the tests (pre-study and post-study ones). And data were also taken from STEP (the Society for Testing English Proficiency, Inc.).

In academic ability test 1 (pre-study test) at the end of July [Table 1], the averages of the experimental group and the control group are respectively 73.0 and 72.8, in mock test, 42.8 and 36.3. There are no significant differences according to the 't-test'. In Hosoi test C the averages are respectively 91.3 and 91.3, in Hosoi test D, 83.3 and 82.0. There are also no significant differences. In the comic strip, the number of words used are respectively 21.5 and 21.8, the number of sentences 4.8 and 5.8, the whole length of the talk 16.8s and 16.0s. There are no significant differences in these three items. In

the conversation with the ALT, the averages of response and manner of talking are respectively 5.3 and 5.3, of grammar 6.0 and 7.3, of pronunciation 6.5 and 8.0, and of the total 17.8 and 20.5. There are no significant differences. I chose the four control group students of the same level as the four experimental group students using academic ability and mock tests. There are no significant differences in all the tests given to them.

After the overseas study at the beginning of September [Table 2], in academic ability test 2, the averages are respectively 60.5 and 56.0, in summer test, 70.8 and 69.8. There are no significant differences. In Hoso test C, the averages are respectively 95.0 and 88.8, in Hoso test D, 45.3 and 36.8. There are respectively significant differences in 5% level. In the comic strip, the number of words used are respectively 50.3 and 16.8, the number of sentences 12.0 and 5.8, the whole length of the talk 48.8s and 14.0s. There are, in all the three items, significant differences in 0.5%, 2% and 0.1% levels respectively. In the conversation with the ALT, the averages of response and manner of talking are respectively 9.0 and 5.3, with the significant difference in 0.4% level. The averages of grammar are 7.3 and 7.3, with no significant difference. The averages of pronunciation are 7.8 and 7.5, with no significant difference. The averages of the totals are 24.0 and 20.0, with the significant difference in 3% level.

In the STEP exam at the middle of October [Table 3], in the written test the averages are respectively 24.0 and 20.8, with no significant difference; in the listening test, 15.5 and 8.8, with the significant difference in 0.4% level; in the total, 39.5 and 29.5, with the significant difference in 5% level.

Since there were no significant differences in the written tests (academic ability test, summer test, and STEP written test) in September and October, I gave the students Cloze+Reading+Writing test in November [Table 4]. The averages of the cloze test are respectively 30.5 and 22.5, with no significant difference; the averages of the reading test 22.5 and 18.8, with no significant difference; the averages of the writing test 11.3 and 7.5, with a tendency of difference but not a significant difference. However, in the total of the three items the averages are 64.3 and 48.8, with a significant difference in 5% level.

Now I will inspect the hypotheses. As for hypothesis 1, there are significant differences in 5% level in Hoso tests C and D, and also in 0.4% level in the listening test in the STEP exam. I can say the learners' listening ability was definitely improved. So hypothesis 1 was supported. As for hypothesis 2, in the comic strip, there are significant differences in 0.5% level in the numbers of the words used and in 2% level in the number of the sentences. This means the sentences spoken are getting longer. There is also a significant difference in 0.1% level in the length of the talk. This indicates an improvement not only in speaking ability but in the attitude toward it. In the conversation with the ALT, there is a significant difference in 0.4% level in the response and manner of talking. That is to say the students' response was quicker and their attitude to speaking was improved by the overseas study. There is also a significant difference in 5% level in the total. So hypothesis 2 was supported. But in grammar and pronunciation there

is not much advance in the three weeks' study. Lastly as for hypothesis 3. There is a significant difference in 5% level in the total in the STEP exam. There tends to be a greater difference in the written test in the STEP exam in October, and there is a significant difference in 5% level in the Cloze+Reading+Writing test in November. The seminar in Australia was done mainly in spoken English, not in written English, but an improvement in the latter was noticed two and a half months later. This good effect comes from the students' positive attitude to English learning, which I can see in the daily English classes. And among the STEP examinees A-H, A and D of the experimental group passed the 1st STEP test, but none of the control group passed. So in the former group 50% passed, but in the latter 0%. In addition A and D also passed the 2nd STEP test. And two of the participants in the overseas study belong to E.S.S. now. So from the improvements of the length of the talk, of the response and manner of talking in the conversation with the ALT, of the Cloze+Reading+Writing test, of the STEP exam and the higher percentage of the passing of the STEP exam, hypothesis 3 was supported.

## 5. Conclusion

Some people say that three weeks' overseas study is a success only if the participants become motivated to learn English. However this time by analysing the data, three hypotheses were supported. The result was much better than I expected. The overseas study gave a greater influence on the improvements not only of listening and speaking but also of the attitude toward English learning. I believe that we can achieve a greater effect by advising the participants not to use Japanese and to try to speak as much English as possible and to make the most of this valuable opportunity while in the overseas study.

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