

交換留学生のダイアリー・スタディーの予備調査 — 帰国後に見られる再適応の諸問題 —

A Pilot Study of Study-Abroad Students' Diary Studies: Re-entry Issues upon Returning Home

武田 礼子 TAKEDA, Reiko

● 成城大学, 国際基督教大学教育研究所研究員

Seijo University / Research Fellow, Institute for Educational Research and Service, International Christian University

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ABSTRACT

海外留学に出発前の学生を対象に留学準備講座を開設する大学は増加しているが、帰国後の学生に対応する講座の設置は発展途上である。そのため留学期間が終了し帰国した学生に対し、単位換算などの事務手続き以外のフォローアップを行う体制作りが課題となっている。本論では二学期間の長期留学を経験した大学生のダイアリー・スタディーの予備調査を報告する。調査が行われた私立大学では、2017年度に出発前の留学準備講座が開講されたが、帰国した学生に対し日本における再適応のための指導は行われていない。そこで筆者は帰国後の再適応のプロセスを探求することを目的とし、二人の学生を対象に英語でのダイアリー・スタディーを実施し、うち一人の学生の記述内容を通して、帰国後の再適応プロセスを考察する。帰国後の留学生の再適応に焦点を当てることにより、大学が提供できる支援体制の可能性を探る。

In recent years, a growing number of Japanese universities have created courses to prepare their students for studying abroad. However, despite the demand for assistance to ease the students' re-entry back in Japan, besides transferring credits and other administrative procedures, a structure to follow up on their return to the home institution may not be available. This paper introduces a pilot study, which focuses on diary studies of Japanese university students who studied abroad for two semesters. The home university, which is a

private institution, created a study-abroad preparation class in 2017; however, there has not been any post-sojourn course offered for returning students. In the present research notes, I conduct a diary study based on entries written in English by one former exchange student with an emphasis on his re-entry process in Japan. Shedding light on issues which Japanese students experience upon their return, this paper explores how universities and institutions can help their re-entry back in Japan, which is an understudied area.

1. Introduction

In the past decade, the number of Japanese university students who participated in study-abroad programs has been on the rise. According to Japan Student Services Organization (2020), about 36,000 students took courses at overseas institutions on a non-degree-seeking program. By 2018, this number nearly tripled, reaching over 115,000. In the meantime, a variety of courses have been created to prepare students for their study abroad.

While pre-sojourn courses are highly popular, opportunities for students to share their post-sojourn experiences may be limited. In a study-abroad symposium held at a private university in western Japan (Weatherford, 2018), students discussed their experiences before, during, and after their year abroad. Although participants were excited to share their overseas experience, they appeared reluctant to disclose their difficulty adjusting back in Japan, including the culture shock they felt. This could be attributed to students' tendency to overlook their difficulties which are confusing (Alred, 2003).

This pilot study introduces diary studies of Japanese university students who studied abroad. After completing their program, two students enrolled in an academic research course I taught. Of the two enrollees, one participant is featured in the present research notes, which explore the re-entry issues that he wrote in his diary.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Study Abroad and Culture Shock

In 2011, the Japanese government established the Council on Promotion of Human Resource for Globalization Development (2011), which identified three groups of factors as requisite for developing global human resources. The first factor consists of language and communication skills. The second factor relates to individual qualities such as positiveness, cooperativeness and a sense of responsibility. The third factor mentions the understanding of other cultures. What is not addressed is one's ability to adapt to new situations, as living in another country is not synonymous with the acquisition of a foreign language or even global-mindedness (Jackson, 2018). While these factors are valid, they alone may not represent what global citizens experience, of which the adjustment process is crucial.

The literature on study-abroad in the Japanese context covers a variety of topics. As for university students, a widely-researched area is their career development and employability (e.g., Genjima, 2013). In addition, measuring individuals' interculturality by using models such as Bennett's (1986) Developmental Model of Intercultural Sensitivity (DMIS) has been attempted. While Bennett asserts that the DMIS can be applied to any culture, Yamamoto's (2014) findings reveal that her Japanese subjects do not replicate Bennett's patterns. Furthermore, research on the readjustment of Japanese returnees (e.g., Kanno, 2003) has dealt with students up to secondary school and not at the university level.

When addressing the returnee experience, reference has often been made to culture shock (Oberg, 1960, as cited in Furnham & Bochner, 1986). While the concept has evolved over the years, it is defined as value differences caused by contact with another culture which results in negative reaction (Furnham & Bochner, 1986), a psychological construct to explain the adjustment process to unfamiliar environments (Pedersen, 1995), and a natural reaction to the clash of cultures (Neuliep, 2018).

The stages of culture shock are likened to a U-curve (Lysgaard, 1955, as cited in Furnham & Bochner, 1986), which starts with a brief honeymoon stage, followed by the culture shock phase, which represents the dip of the U-curve. This is said to be when negative feelings develop towards cultural differences. The third stage, albeit slow and gradual, is the adjustment phase when individuals start having a positive outlook about their problems. Finally, in the adaptation stage, they become capable of functioning in the new culture.

2.2 Study-Abroad Students' Re-entry Process and Diary Studies

Culture shock does not end after one's adaptation to the host culture as individuals may experience re-entry culture shock upon returning to their home country (Neuliep, 2018). Originally, culture shock was referred to as a disease (Furnham & Bochner, 1986); however, recently, scholars have focused on the process of cultural orientation, be it in the host country or back home. Studies have reported that the shape of U-curves vary depending on individuals' experience and adjustment to the host culture. Furthermore, there seems to be disagreement over whether culture shock occurs after repatriation, referred to as the W-curve (Gullahorn & Gullahorn, 1963, as cited in Furnham & Bochner, 1986) which is illustrated with a U-curve followed by another U-curve.

After returning from their study abroad, US students have reported their experience of positive (e.g., excited, happy, comfortable) and challenging (e.g., bored, depressed, confused, alienated) feelings of re-entry (Kartoshkina, 2015). In addition, returnees may equate re-entry with an end to their global experience, which stirs up emotions about their loss; hence, it becomes something they would rather avoid than face (Brubaker, 2017). A suggestion is for students to reflect on their experience, which engages them to ease their re-entry process. Besides holding workshops or providing counseling services for returnees, a popular strategy is journal writing.

Diaries, which are interchangeably used for journals, have been used to explore what writers learn. Unlike a single journal entry or reflective writing activity, the long-term nature of diary studies allows researchers to focus on the personal development of participants. In applied linguistics, for example, diary studies of language teachers focused on their own development as language learners. The length of the study has been roughly equivalent to their duration of stay in the country of the target language (e.g., two-months in Mexico for Campbell, 1996; over a decade in Japan for Casanave, 2012). Diary studies provide researchers the benefit of taking a first-person approach in the process of learning another language and the emotions involved.

Written reflections allow study-abroad students to recall information from their overseas experience (Dressler et al., 2018). Although the need for a structure to guide students in their reflective writing is proposed, there are no specific guidelines (Kappler Mikk et al., 2019). Difficulties in engaging returnees in re-entry events may be attributed to them not experiencing the post-sojourn stage in the same way as their pre-sojourn phase and they simply may not be interested (Brubaker, 2017). Under these circumstances, it could be

challenging to conduct diary studies, even though the writers have the potential to provide a wealth of information and knowledge from their overseas experience.

3. Methods

This diary study was conducted over the course of a 15-week semester at a private university in Tokyo, during the Fall 2019 term.

3.1 Course Description and Participants

The academic research course in English is designed for students who have returned from their study abroad. In addition to the structured research writing, I suggest to students to keep a diary in English to maintain their English proficiency which they gained during their year abroad.

Two students, who were economics majors at a private university in Tokyo, were enrolled in the course and agreed to participate in the diary studies. They had just returned from their study abroad during Fall 2018 and Spring 2019.

3.2 Procedure and Analysis of Data

Over the course of the term, the students wrote diary entries in English for a minimum of five days a week. The diaries, which were hand-written in notebooks I provided, were collected every week. As the focus was for participants to reflect on their thoughts regarding their re-entry and not on grammatical accuracy, I did not correct their English, except for minor spelling errors. Diary entries were analyzed based on the positive and challenging themes which Kartoshkina (2015) identified, but unique to Japanese students' experiences.

4. Makoto's Diary Entries

The present research notes focus on written

reflections by Makoto, which is not his real name. He matriculated at university in April 2017 and enrolled in the academic writing course I taught. Makoto was determined to study abroad and was keen on leaving in his second year so he could come back in time for job-hunting. After studying at a university in the US for two semesters, Makoto returned to Japan in May 2019.

On the first day of the academic research course, Makoto wrote about his positive outlook on his re-entry.

[September 26]

"I start to write my journal from today. During the class, I made a presentation about my studying abroad experience. For me, it's a good time to review my experience and I find new discovery of my studying abroad. These days, I'm worried about (1) how to keep my motivation, (2) how I can learn higher level of studies than I could in the US, and (2) how to do maintenance of my English. I will record my ideas related to these problems when I discover."

The writing activity, which was well-received by Makoto, seemed to serve as an outlet to express himself. Some weeks later, he wrote that he missed his identity as an exchange student in the US (Brubaker, 2017).

[October 14]

"Time goes so fast. It has been almost five months since I came back to Japan. I guess I was really afraid of going back to Japan. There were two reasons about the negative mind. First reason was I didn't have confidence of making use of my study abroad experience. Second reason was I didn't become an ordinary Japanese university student and I wanted to keep standing on special status as an exchange student."

During his year-abroad, Makoto found his niche which was data science, a discipline he continues to pursue in Japan. At the suggestion of his data science professor, Makoto started participating in

business presentation contests. Before his first contest, he wrote in Japanese about how nervous he was. Although he wrote that he did poorly, Makoto demonstrated his resilience by preparing for two other contests.

[November 6]

“I’m working for two projects. One is the business contest, the other is machiene [machine] learning contest. I believe that, without practicing, people can’t learn anything. That’s because, until June, it is only [in] reading that I learned programming. Therefore, I couldn’t make my own programming after I started to enter programming contest. From the time, my programming level is rapidly improved.”

Although not mentioned in his writing, he participated in the contests as a member of a group, which was formed by his professor. Makoto wrote about his frustrations over his team members.

[November 7]

“These days, I’m struggling with the difference between my education level and that of my friend. It’s becoming difficult to find a new goal in school, because seeing my senior student and my junior hardly gave me an impression [inspiration]. Therefore, I started to go outside of school to get an impression [inspiration] for my next goal. For instance, I will participate in a blockchain event this weekend. Making use of this kind of event, I will make new future goal.”

Makoto’s efforts paid off as he won the first prize in the contest he entered with his group. He attributed his success to his study abroad experience.

[November 13]

“Congratulations! Makoto! I won the first prize in the marketing analysis contest. This contest is the biggest contest that students can apply in Japan. This is the result of my experience from trying to do several business contests, studying abroad, practicing presentation and so on. I am

really glad to get the result. Anyway, congrats! Myself!”

After winning first prize, Makoto realized that there was disagreement among different faculty who seemed to want to claim credit for the students’ accomplishments.

[November 15]

“Oh my god! I’m in trouble now. A battle among professors have happened. Because of the business contest result, professors started to battle to decide who will get the fruits. I don’t know why adult people really care about the possession. Especially, my seminar professor scold me for about an hour.”

Makoto seemed very confused about his professor’s behavior. He also told me that he had a close relationship with the faculty in the US, whereas in Japan, the faculty-student relationship seemed distant, even with his seminar professor. In time, however, he was able to turn his attention to two other interests: a study-abroad informational session and job hunting.

[December 2]

“Today I made a presentation about [the university in the US]. My presentation partner mistook the time and she didn’t appear on the event... Anyway, I did good presentation. As creating presentation slides, I considered freshman and sophomore students. I think I gave good information for them.”

[December 6]

“I had a job-hunting orientation today. I went to the headquarter of the company [that] held a business contest which I won recently. I listened to several information about the company and an analytics job. In addition, a human resource manager remembers me and we talked for a few minutes. Thinking of today’s orientation, I think I can get a job from the company.”

5. Discussion and Implications

Makoto's last entry was in January, before the fall semester ended. Overall, his writing shows that back in Japan, he went through stages that were similar to the U-curve (Furnham & Bochner, 1986), although they did not start immediately after his return. The honeymoon stage surfaced in October, when he seemed excited about the preparation for the business presentation contests. Although this was followed by another peak, which was winning first prize (November 13), there was a steep fall when he felt confused over his professor's behavior (November 15). In December, he appeared to have regained his resilience by presenting his experience to potential study-abroad students (December 2) and started his job search, which is a major event for Japanese university students (December 6). These events could represent the adjustment and adaptation phases.

Even though Makoto returned to Japan in May, it may not be surprising that his culture shock in Japan, or the W-curve (Furnham & Bochner, 1986) surfaced after the fall semester started because his re-entry process as a returning student could have paralleled his acculturation process as an exchange student to the US (October 14). Just as Kartoshkina's (2015) participants reported both positive and challenging feelings involving their re-entry, so did Makoto. In his diaries, events were tied to his positive feelings (e.g., presentation contests, speaking to potential study-abroad students, and job-hunting; November 13, December 2 and 6), but some difficulties over relationships brought out the challenging emotions he felt (e.g., with teammates from his presentation group and his professor; November 7 and 15).

One positive outcome needs to be acknowledged. Two months after my last class with Makoto, when I was reading a weekly magazine in Japanese, I came across an article which mentioned that data

science courses were becoming popular in Japanese universities. Because there was a section in the story which alluded to Makoto, I sent him an email and the URL to the article. Makoto was surprised but pleased to see his comments, especially as he wrote them at the request of his professor, with whom his relationship seemed to have improved.

There are several remarks which need to be made on this pilot study. First, the scope of this paper is limited as it focused only on one participant's diary study, due to limitations of space. The diary of the second participant, whose re-entry process does not follow a W-curve, will be discussed in a future paper.

Second, this study deals with reflective writing in the form of diaries, which is only one strategy to assist study-abroad students with their re-entry. More strategies, such as workshops and discussions, need to be piloted before launching a formal re-entry program.

Finally, regarding the timing of re-entry sessions, it may be best to conduct them shortly after the new semester starts. This is because once classes begin, it may be difficult to maintain the students' interest, as they could become busy with classes and job-hunting. To ensure that students are aware of their re-entry, it may be necessary for study-abroad personnel to present sessions (i.e., before and after) prior to their sojourn as a package, rather than in isolation. While universities hold sessions for potential study-abroad students, where former exchange students serve as speakers, these are sessions for interested students, and not for the returning students. There need to be sessions exclusively for the returnees so that they know they are fully supported before, during and after their study-abroad.

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