Short-Term Residence Abroad and its Effectiveness for Pre-Adolescent Second Language Learners

思春期前の第二言語学習者における短期海外滞在の効果

A Dissertation Presented to
the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
International Christian University
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

国際基督教大学　大学院

アーツ・サイエンス研究科提出博士論文

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates the impact of short-term residence abroad (RA) without formal study on L2 development in pre-adolescent learners. It explores: (1) how well pre-adolescents can narrate a story in an L2 after one month's residence abroad, and (2) how early learners must start to learn an L2 to benefit from a RA experience.

Fifty-five Japanese junior high school students (aged 12–14), who engaged in a one-month RA program in the United States or Canada, participated in this study. They were asked to tell in English the story in Mayer's (1969) wordless picture book, *Frog, where are you?*, immediately before and after their experience abroad. The participants' narrative performances were analyzed both *quantitatively* and *qualitatively*.

Scores were obtained on the narrative data based on analyses of linguistic aspects (the total number and mean length of utterances, lexical and syntactic complexity) as well as story structure (plot elements). The *quantitative* analyses based on these scores reveal clear benefits of short-term residence abroad for increasing narrative ability at both the story structure and linguistic structure levels. The participants generally became able to describe more plot elements, producing more utterances and using a greater variety of vocabulary in their post-abroad narratives than in their pre-abroad ones.

The participants were divided into three groups according to whether they received High, Middle or Low scores in their post-story narratives to examine the changes

in the ways they narrate the story in English before and after their stay abroad. Improvements were more drastic for the participants in the High and Middle groups than for those in the Low group (who generally scored lower in both story structure and linguistic structure measures in the pre-abroad sessions), indicating that learners may need a certain threshold level of proficiency for noticeable improvement in a RA context.

The *qualitative* analyses illustrated different patterns of development between the participants in the three groups. That is, while the participants generally became better at producing a narrative after being abroad, the High-group participants tended to construct a structurally and linguistically more complex story than the participants in the other two groups in the post-abroad sessions. Specifically, they became able to produce more elaborated descriptions not only by recounting the temporal and causal relations between the events but also by expressing the inferred feelings of the characters of the story. Linguistically, the High-group participants started to compose grammatically complex sentences more frequently than the participants in the other two groups in their post-abroad narratives. However, not much change could be found in the participants' morphosyntactic accuracy (e.g., inaccurate use of articles, verbs, and tense morphemes) after being abroad.

With regard to the second aim of this study, it was found that the participants who began learning English before age 5 tended to benefit more from their short experience abroad based on correlations between their narrative scores and when they started learning

English. This suggests that the actual starting age of L2 learning may also contribute to L2 gains in a short-term RA context. Due to the small number of participants who were recruited from a unique RA program organized by an English language institution in Japan, the findings cannot be widely generalized. Nevertheless, the conclusion from this study remains that participating in a homestay for one month abroad without any formal study can enhance pre-adolescent learners' oral narrative development in a target language, especially for children who begin learning their L2 before age 5. To gain more-in-depth and generalizable knowledge about age and L2 gains in short-term language immersion, more studies of learners with different starting ages and different RA programs are needed in the future.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.1 Background to research

Sending language learners to a country where the target language is spoken is commonly perceived as the most efficient way to improve second language (L2) proficiency. The idea comes from the belief that in such learning contexts, one can automatically receive massive opportunities to be exposed to and practice the target language (Borràs & Llanes, 2020; Isabelli-García, Bown, Plews, & Dewey, 2018; Llanes & Muñoz, 2009, 2013). Indeed, the number of university students participating in 'study abroad' (SA) programs has steadily increased in the last several decades and reached over six million in 2019[1] – more than twice the number in 2007 (OECD, 2021). Along with this trend, the Institute of International Education (2021) indicated that more people are now choosing 'short-term' programs: among 347,099 American SA students in 2018/19, approximately 62% participated in short-term SA programs (fewer than eight weeks), 36% engaged in mid-length (one or two quarters, or one semester), and only 2% chose long-

[1] It should be noted here that in the last two years, the growth rate in the number of participants in SA programs has slowed down due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic (Institute of International Education, 2021; OECD, 2021).

term (academic or calendar year) SA experiences. It has also been reported that more young learners, including child and pre-adolescent learners, choose to engage in 'residence abroad' (RA) during their summer vacations (Borràs & Llanes, 2020; Kinginger, 2015) and to engage in such experiences privately – that is, not within institutional contexts (Llanes & Muñoz, 2009). As a Japanese learner of English, I also engaged in such a short-term RA experience when I was twelve. I stayed in a monolingual English family's home in the United States for a month during my summer vacation. Although I did not receive any formal language instruction while abroad, I gradually became able to communicate with each member of my host family in English and build a good relationship with them by the end of that summer. Twenty years later, my hosts and I still exchange letters and emails. This rich experience has raised my curiosity about short-term RA experiences in general and about their effectiveness for developing L2 proficiency, the main theme of this study.

More researchers in the last twenty years have started to investigate the effectiveness of spending time abroad for L2 learning. They have focused primarily on undergraduate students in academic SA programs offered by their universities. These studies have generally compared oral proficiency in SA students with their peers who studied in at-home (AH) settings and suggested that the SA students made more progress than the AH students (Hernández, 2010; Jochum, 2014; Lindseth, 2010; Mora & Valss-

Ferrer, 2012; Segalowitz et al., 2004). The literature has also emphasized the benefits of short-term SA experiences for oral improvement, particularly in terms of fluency as well as lexical and syntactic complexity (Baró & Serrano, 2011; D'Amico, 2012; Di Silvio, Diao, & Donovan, 2016; Freed, Segalowitz, & Dewey, 2004; Mora & Valss-Ferrer, 2012; Segalowitz et al., 2004; Serrano, Llanes, & Tragant, 2011).

While the findings of these studies have provided valuable insight into the effectiveness of SA for enhancing oral development in adult L2 learners, little is still known about how much younger learners, such as child or pre-adolescent learners, can benefit from naturalistic short-term language immersion experiences without formally study the target language. As far as I am aware, only very few studies to date have examined the effects of spending time abroad on oral development in young L2 learners, and such studies consistently investigated Catalan-Spanish bilingual children learning English in SA settings (Llanes & Muñoz, 2009, 2013; Llanes & Serrano, 2017; Muñoz & Llanes, 2014). Therefore, more research on young learners with different L1 backgrounds (or of different target languages) in RA as well as SA settings are certainly needed to better understand the benefits of being in a target language environment for L2 learning.

1.2 Aim and scope

Against the background given above, the present study investigates the impact of short-term residence abroad without formal study on L2 development. The study looks at

younger participants going abroad than in SA studies to examine age effects on language development after earlier immersion. The research questions and hypotheses steering the analyses are as follows:

1. How well can Japanese pre-adolescents narrate a story in English after one month's residence abroad?

   Hypothesis 1: All participants become better at producing a narrative in English after their one-month residence abroad.

2. How early must learners start to learn an L2 to benefit from a residence abroad experience?

   Hypothesis 2: The earlier participants start learning an L2 in their home country, the better they benefit from a residence abroad experience.

1.3 Outline of dissertation

This dissertation consists of the following six chapters. Chapter 2 focuses on the literature on age effects on L2 development to gain knowledge of how age may (or may not) influence one's L2 learning. It starts with reviewing studies related to Lenneberg's (1967) critical period hypothesis – one of the most influential and frequently investigated theories in the field of L2 acquisition. It then reviews previous research on the interaction effects of age and other non-biological factors; namely, the L1-L2 relationship and learning settings on L2 learning.

Chapter 3 reviews research on the effectiveness of spending time abroad for L2 development. The review includes studies that have examined the effects of short-term SA on listening skills and comprehension, general oral proficiency, as well as oral fluency, complexity, and accuracy, all of which are related to narrative skills – the focus of the present study. The final section introduces the definition of narrative ability and reviews several SA and RA studies that have investigated the impact of such intensive language immersion contexts on learners' narrative improvement.

Chapter 4 provides the details of participants and the RA program targeted in the present study. The material and quantitative and qualitative methods used for data analysis are also fully described in this chapter.

Results obtained from analyzing the participants' narrative performance are presented in Chapters 5 and 6. Specifically, Chapter 5 provides the findings and discussion from the quantitative analyses of the participants' narrative data. The first two sections of this chapter are framed primarily as answers to the first research question concerning the effects of short-term residence abroad on narrative development, while the last section is framed as an answer to the second research question related to age effects on narrative improvement in RA context. In Chapter 6, the findings and discussion from the qualitative analyses are given. Examples from the participants' narrative data provide a deeper insight into how much they improved their narratives after being immersed in English for a month.

Chapter 7 summarizes the main findings and addresses the implications of the present study. It also outlines some limitations of this study and proposes possible directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

Early Versus Late Starters: The Younger the Better?

2.1 The validity of a critical period for L2 learning

Age has long been identified as one of the most crucial themes in the field of L2 acquisition. Research on age effects has received considerable attention in the last three decades, which generally focused on the relationship between the age at which learners (in most cases immigrants) start to acquire an L2 and their *ultimate attainment* in that language. The results of these studies often show a strong tendency for younger starters to outperform older ones in different language domains, mainly in morphosyntax and in pronunciation, and reach native-like attainment in the long run (Birdsong & Vanhove, 2016; DeKeyser, Alfi-Shabtay, Ravid, 2010; Hyltenstam, 2018; Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2003; Muñoz & Singleton, 2011; Stölten, Abrahamsson, & Hyltenstam, 2015).

One of the most frequently cited studies on this issue is that of Johnson and Newport (1989), who suggested a negative correlation between participants' age of arrival (AoA) and their eventual outcomes in L2. In this study, the authors investigated English proficiency in 46 Chinese and Korean natives who had settled in the United States between

the ages of 3 and 39. The results of the grammaticality judgment test showed that while early arrivals (ages 3−7) uniformly performed like native speakers, there was a gradual decline in the level of participants' proficiency from ages 7 to 17 and that their proficiency leveled off after that age. In a replication of Johnson and Newport's (1989) study, DeKeyser (2000) investigated 57 Hungarian immigrants who have resided in the United States for at least 10 years and also found that participants' performances in English grammar were negatively correlated with their AoA. Interestingly, together with their questionnaire data, the author further revealed no significant correlation between their grammaticality test scores and other variables such as length of residence, years of schooling, and age at time of testing. Likewise, DeKeyser, Alfi-Shabtay, and Ravid (2010) conducted two parallel studies with Russian natives: one on the acquisition of English as an L2 in North America (N=76), and the other on the acquisition of Hebrew as an L2 in Israel (N=64). Despite the different nature of the target languages, their two studies consistently show a steep decline in ultimate attainment in L2 grammar before age 18, with the biggest decline seen around age 12. Additionally, the studies by Fathman (1975; N=200) and Thompson (1991; N=36), which investigated English pronunciation of immigrants with different L1 backgrounds in the United States, also confirmed the long-term advantage of younger arrivals in acquiring native-like pronunciation. Based on the results of oral production tests, both studies found that participants whose arrival age was

below 11 had only a slight foreign accent whereas those who had moved to the country after this age often spoke with foreign accents in their speech. A similar pattern of results has been obtained by Munro, Flege, and Mackay (1996; on 20 Korean natives) and Baker, Trofimovich, Mack, and Flege (2002; on 240 Italian natives), who examined discrimination of English vowels by immigrants living in English-speaking countries. Both studies showed that the early starters (AoA, M=7 in Munro et al.; M=9 in Baker et al.) produced English vowels more accurately than the late starters (AoA, M=19 in Munro et al. & Baker et al.) and did not differ significantly from native speakers of English.

The interpretation of these results generally adheres to Lenneberg's (1967) *critical period hypothesis* (CPH) which holds that there is a period in life, starting at the age of 2 and ending around puberty, where language acquisition must take place or otherwise it will be impossible to master a first language (L1) completely. This hypothesis rests on the assumption that language learning outcomes are closely associated with the maturational changes in one's brain (i.e., lateralization); in other words, one's brain becomes less "plastic" as it matures, and such loss of plasticity hinders language learning. While the CPH was proposed originally for L1 acquisition, the above results have led researchers to believe that a critical period does exist for L2 acquisition and that native-like proficiency is unattainable, particularly in the areas of morphosyntax and pronunciation, after the close of the critical period.

Some researchers, however, have raised doubts as to the validity of the CPH, pointing to the existence of learners who, despite a late start, reach native-like proficiency in their L2 (Birdsong & Vanhove, 2016; Hyltenstam, 2018; Hyltenstam & Abrahamsson, 2003; Muñoz & Singleton, 2011; Schouten, 2009; Stölten, Abrahamsson, & Hyltenstam, 2015). As an illustration, White and Genesee (1996) presented a grammaticality judgment task and a question formation task to 89 speakers of English as an L2 to determine whether native-like grammatical competence is achievable even by late (i.e., post-puberty or adult) L2 learners. The results provided counter-evidence to the CPH as several participants, despite their age of initial exposure to English taking place after the critical period, performed at a native-level on the two tasks, both in terms of their accuracy and their speed. Using Johnson and Newport's (1989) grammaticality judgment test, Birdsong and Molis (2001) also examined the grammatical intuitions of Spanish immigrants in the United States and obtained different results from those reported by Johnson and Newport (1989). While only one out of 23 late arrivals performed at a native-like level in Johnson and Newport (1989), the authors discovered that 13 out of 32 late arrivals had native-like performances on the same test. For Birdsong and Molis (2001), these data challenge the notion of the critical period and, more importantly, suggest that Johnson and Newport's findings are not generalizable – though they have frequently been cited as strong evidence to support the CPH – to different L1-L2 pairings. In the area of phonology, Moyer (1999)

also questions the biological view of a critical period by suggesting that considering age as the *only* predictor for eventual L2 outcomes is too "simplistic". In her study of 24 American graduate students in German, Moyer (1999) administered a series of pronunciation tasks (i.e., a read-aloud task and a free-response task) as well as a questionnaire to examine whether any participants can attain a native-like pronunciation in the target language and explore if there are any non-biological factors affecting learners' L2 phonological outcomes. While the results indicate the fundamental relationship between the participants' age and their ultimate attainment as suggested by the CPH, the author found one exception who demonstrated a native-level performance on the tasks, even though he was not intensively exposed to German before the age of 22. Since this learner reported a high motivation, deep cultural empathy, strong desire to sound German, and a tendency to spend more time with native speakers, Moyer (1999) concludes that such non-biological differences should not be disregarded but should be considered in combination with age effects in seeking to explain one's L2 ultimate attainment.

Bongaerts, Mennen, and van der Silk (2000) make a similar suggestion as Moyer (1999), pointing out that a native-like accent is attainable for late (i.e., adolescent or adult) learners if they have a high motivation as well as ample exposure to the target language. In their study of 30 advanced L2 learners who had settled in the Netherlands between the ages of 11 and 34, Bongaerts et al. (2000) discovered two participants (with AoAs 14 and 21) with

native-level pronunciation in Dutch. As with Moyer's (1999) data, these two learners expressed a higher motivation for attaining good pronunciation and were more intensively exposed to the language in natural – not in instructional – settings, compared with other learners.

Other researchers have also questioned the applicability of the CPH across different learning contexts as the literature on this theory has focused mainly on the learners (i.e., immigrants) who acquired the target language in naturalistic language learning settings (as seen above). As noted by Llanes and Muñoz (2013), the learning context plays a decisive role in L2 learning processes. It directly affects the quality and quantity of the language input he or she encounters, and the chances in which he or she can practice the target language. Some researchers, therefore, argue that the CPH or the idea that *younger is better* cannot be simply applied to all language learning situations and that effects of the interaction between age and learning context on L2 development should be examined (Llanes & Muñoz, 2013; Muñoz, 2008a, 2008b, 2010, 2014; Muñoz & Llanes, 2014; Muñoz & Singleton, 2011).

Considering all these findings, the importance of age effects on L2 learning cannot be disregarded. There seems to be a link between the AoA and eventual outcomes in L2, and child starters seem more likely than adult starters to attain native-like proficiency in natural settings, particularly with respect to phonological and

morphosyntactic domains. As was suggested by some researchers, however, this does not necessarily mean the impossibility for late L2 learners to reach native-like competence. Their findings of successful adult or adolescent learners suggest that AoA by itself may not always be a sufficient explanation for L2 attainment and that other non-biological factors (such as the relationship between L1 and L2 and language engagement) may predict one's L2 development (Birdsong & Molis, 2001; Bongaerts et al., 2000; Moyer, 1999). In addition, the role of the learning context and how it interacts with age seem also important factors to be considered in L2 learning (Llanes & Muñoz, 2013; Muñoz, 2008a, 2008b, 2014; Muñoz & Singleton, 2011).

2.2 The interaction effects of age and L1-L2 relationship on L2 learning

Given that a critical period is not necessarily absolute for L2 acquisition, non-biological factors affecting individual differences in L2 development have been the subject of much research. Among possible factors, many researchers have investigated the effect of the L1 on L2 morphosyntactic development. These studies have generally focused on L2 grammatical errors caused by the transfer of learners' L1 knowledge or on the differences in acquisition order of grammatical morphemes by L2 learners with various L1 backgrounds (Leśniewska & Pichette, 2018; Luk & Shirai, 2009; Martohardjono & Klein, 2017). Pichette and Leśniewska (2018) provide an excellent review of such research that examined the percentage of L1-based grammatical errors in the English (oral or written)

production of L2 learners. Based on 34 studies published in the past 45 years, the authors conclude that while there are differences in methodologies between these studies, there is indeed strong L1 influence on L2 morpheme acquisition as more than 40% of grammatical errors found in the learners' English production are attributed to their L1. Similarly, Luk and Shirai (2009) compiled 12 studies conducted with native speakers of Japanese, Chinese, and Korean and revealed that the articles and plural morphemes of English were more difficult for speakers of these languages (in comparison with speakers of other languages such as Spanish) due to the absence of articles and plurals in their L1. Additionally, the authors found that the English possessive morpheme was easier for speakers of these three Asian languages (which have similar possessive marking), compared with Spanish speakers (who do not have the similar possessive feature in their L1). For Luk and Shirai (2009), such findings indicate that L2 learners do not always follow Krashen's (1982) *natural order*, the idea that learners acquire L2 grammatical morphemes in predictable sequences (e.g., plural is acquired the earliest, article is second, and possessive –*'s* is last), and that the acquisition order of these items is affected by the degree of similarities (or dissimilarities) between learners' L1 and L2.

While these comprehensive reviews of the morphological studies consistently suggest strong (positive or negative) effects of the L1 on L2 development, Lee (2008) argues that learners do not necessarily automatically rely on their L1 knowledge when

acquiring L2 grammar. In a study of a Chinese child learning German as an L2, she reports that the child easily acquired the tense structures of the L2, even though the Chinese language does not have such tense markers. For Lee (2008), this result indicates a possibility that children can acquire L2 without adopting prior grammatical knowledge of their L1; and thus, a widely-held idea (or so-called "Full Transfer/Full Access Model" [Schwartz & Sprouse, 1996] which assumes this) that the initial state of L2 acquisition is made up of L1 grammar does not hold true for all L2 learners (or at least for child L2 learners). Nonetheless, more research, particularly that compares children's and adults' morphosyntactic development, is needed to evaluate her claim as well as to further understand whether there are any age differences in the role of L1 in mastering L2 grammar.

More recently, many scholars have also paid attention to the relations between L1 and L2 in reading and writing, assuming that L1 literacy makes a significant contribution to L2 literacy development. This assumption comes from Cummins's (1979) *Linguistic Interdependence Hypothesis* (LIH), which posits that there exists a common proficiency underlying all languages and that learners can transfer concepts, knowledge, and skills acquired in the L1 to their learning of L2. The literature has focused mainly on teens or young adults learning English as an L2 and consistently revealed the positive relations between L1 and L2 English literacy skills in learners with different L1 backgrounds, such

as Dutch (van Gelderen et al., 2007), Spanish (Carlo et al., 2014), Hungarian (Morvay, 2015), Chinese (Chuang, Joshi, & Dixon, 2012; Huang, Liang, & Dracopoulos, 2011), Korean (Pae, 2019), and Japanese (Shibasaki et al., 2015; Yamashita, 2002), thus supporting Cummins's LIH. In addition, some of these studies indicate a strong influence of L2 linguistic proficiency on the transfer of L1 literacy to L2 literacy skills. For example, van Gelderen et al. (2007) investigated 389 Dutch students from Grade 8 through Grade 10 and reported that along with the L1 literacy skills, English proficiency (measured by vocabulary and grammar) contributed significantly to their English reading performance. Yamashita's (2002) study of 241 Japanese university students also found that the students with high English proficiency used their L1 Japanese resources (such as good reading strategies and the relevant knowledge acquired through reading in Japanese) more effectively to comprehend English texts better. Likewise, Morvay (2015) discovered that among 64 Hungarian high school students she studied, only those who had high English proficiency benefitted from their L1 reading skills and achieved a higher level of English reading. Based on this finding, the author concludes that a certain level of L2 proficiency must be obtained before L1 reading skills can be effectively transferred to L2 reading. Finally, Pae (2019) examined the interaction effects of L1 writing and L2 proficiency on L2 writing by looking at the writing performances of 211 Korean middle school students. Similar to the previous findings of L1–L2 relations in reading (Morvay, 2015; van

Gelderen et al., 2007; Yamashita, 2002), the author found that the connection between L1 Korean and L2 English writing skills was significantly stronger for the students with higher English proficiency than for their counterparts with lower English proficiency.

All in all, previous findings consistently suggest strong effects of the transfer of morphosyntactic features between L1 and L2 as well as the positive relations between the two languages in terms of literacy skills. Furthermore, some scholars point out that the effects of such L1 transfer are differentially made depending on learners' age, the similarities (or dissimilarities) between L1 and L2, and the level of L2 proficiency. For instance, the literature indicates that the strength of L1–L2 transfer is altered or moderated by age and the level of differences between L1 and L2, evidencing that learners, particularly adult learners, tend to show more difficulty in acquiring grammatical morphemes that do not exist in their L1 (Lee, 2008; Leśniewska & Leśniewska, 2018; Luk & Shirai, 2009; Martohardjono & Klein, 2017). Lastly, recent studies have confirmed the significant contribution of L1 literacy to L2 literacy skills, regardless of learners' age and the combination of L1 and L2 (Carlo et al., 2014; Chuang, Joshi, & Dixon, 2012; Huang, Liang, & Dracopoulos, 2011; Shibasaki et al., 2015; Pae, 2019; van Gelderen et al., 2007; Yamashita, 2002). The findings also indicate that the level of L2 proficiency significantly moderates the relation between L1 and L2 literacy, meaning that learners with high L2 proficiency are more likely than learners with low L2 proficiency to utilize L1 resources

effectively when reading and writing L2 (Morvay, 2015; Pae, 2019; van Gelderen et al., 2007; Yamashita, 2002).

2.3 The interaction effects of age and learning context on L2 learning

Despite the growing interest in context as one of the key factors that may influence L2 development, it is only in recent work that learning contexts – other than immigration settings – have been systematically studied in relation to learners' age (Lightbown & Spada, 2020; Llanes & Muñoz, 2013; Llanes & Serrano, 2017; Muñoz, 2008b, 2010; Muñoz & Spada, 2018; Pérez-Vidal, López-Serrano, Ament, & Thomas-Wilhelm, 2018). These studies have focused on either instructed language learning settings (as in foreign language situations) or intensive language immersion settings (as in study abroad [SA] situations) and examined whether the commonly held idea that *younger is better* can also be applied to these learning environments. Muñoz (2008b, 2010), for example, investigated groups of Spanish-Catalan bilinguals (N= almost 2000) who had begun to learn English as a foreign language at different ages (8, 10, 14, and 18+) and measured their English proficiency after they had received the same number of hours of instructions (200, 416, and 726). The results show that while differences between the groups decreased in the third session (after 726 hours of instruction), older starters consistently outperformed younger starters, especially in the more cognitively-demanding skills (such as those elicited by the cloze test and dictation). For Muñoz (2008b, 2010),

these findings indicate that older starters seem to be efficient in foreign language learning, where the target language is only available through instruction, since they are more cognitively developed and are thus able to understand the instructions and tasks better and faster in comparison with younger starters. Llanes and Muñoz (2013) examined the interaction between learning context and age by comparing English gains in Catalan-Spanish children (N=73, M=10.5) and adults (N=66, M=20.9) in two different contexts: an AH setting, where they had classes in English for six hours per week in their home country, and SA setting, where they are naturally immersed in English for two or three months. The participants' oral and written data clearly suggest the differential effects of these two learning contexts on their L2 development, showing that the SA context was more beneficial for children (especially in terms of the improvement in their oral skills) while the AH context was more beneficial for adults (for the improvement of their written skills). The authors attribute this finding to the difference between children and adults in their learning mechanisms: children are able to take more advantage of the SA setting due to their superior ability to learn implicitly (or unconsciously), whereas adults can benefit more from the AH setting as they learn largely explicitly (or consciously). In a similar vein, Muñoz and Llanes (2014; N=157) and Llanes and Serrano (2017; N=197) investigated the linguistic gains by Catalan-Spanish bilinguals of different ages learning English either in AH or SA settings and found interaction effects between the learning

context and age, particularly on the acquisition of oral skills. The data elicited from the semi-structured interview and narrative task show that the SA context is superior to the AH context for the development of oral fluency, accuracy, and pronunciation, and that in general, children (aged 10–11) and adolescents (aged 12–14) in the SA context experienced significantly greater gains than the SA adults (aged 19+) in these oral skills. Muñoz and Llanes (2014) and Llanes and Serrano (2017) explain this superiority of younger learners over older ones by the degree of language use and the type of language contact during time spent abroad: child and adolescent learners had more time (three times longer) than adult learners in speaking English with native speakers, whereas adult learners engaged more in reading and speaking with non-native speakers in the host country.

As seen above, previous findings indicate that the effects of age on L2 acquisition are mediated by learning context. In an instructed setting, older learners seem to outperform younger learners, particularly in the more cognitively-demanding tasks, as they have more advanced cognitive abilities and learn mostly explicitly. On the other hand, in a naturalistic setting, younger learners seem to perform better than older ones, especially in oral tasks, due to their superiority at implicit learning and their strong tendency to invest more time in speaking with local people in a target language. While more studies are certainly crucial (especially on learners with different language backgrounds), these

findings shed some light on the importance of considering the interaction between age and context in order to optimize learners' chances for success in L2 acquisition.

This chapter has reviewed some of the age-related studies in the field of L2 acquisition. The literature has suggested on the one hand that age plays a decisive role in L2 development, showing early starters were more likely than late starters to attain native-like proficiency, but on the other that age by itself may not always sufficiently explain L2 attainment and other non-biological factors may need to be considered together. Among possible non-biological factors that may interact with age, this chapter paid close attention to the 'L1-L2 relationship' and 'learning context' as the present study focuses on *Japanese pre-adolescent learners of English in a RA context.* Previous research has often indicated the effects of the transfer of morphosyntactic features between L1 and L2 as well as the positive relationship between the two languages in terms of literacy skills. In addition, some studies have suggested that the degree of such cross-linguistic transfers is modulated not only by age but also by the level of similarities (or dissimilarities) between L1 and L2 and/or the level of L2 proficiency. As for the interaction effects of age and learning context on L2 acquisition, recent studies have shown that child or adolescent learners appear to benefit more than adult learners from intensive immersion contexts (as in SA settings), whereas adults are likely to take more advantage of instructed learning contexts (as in classroom settings) than children or adolescents.

In the next chapter, studies on the effectiveness of spending time abroad for L2 learning will be reviewed to gain a better insight into what could be expected from younger participants in a naturalistic short-term immersion context.

CHAPTER 3

Measuring the Effectiveness of Spending Time Abroad for L2 Learning

The previous chapter has reviewed studies related to age effects on L2 acquisition and indicated the interaction effects of age and non-biological factors – including *learning context* – on L2 development. This chapter expands on the discussion of the effectiveness of naturalistic immersion contexts for L2 learning. Specifically, it reviews studies mainly on undergraduates in academic SA programs – the focus of most research on language immersion – to gain some insight into what could be expected from younger participants in a naturalistic short-term immersion setting. The chapter includes the literature on the effects of such learning contexts on L2 improvements in terms of listening skills and comprehension (section 3.1), general oral proficiency (section 3.2), as well as oral fluency, complexity, and accuracy (section 3.3), all of which are related to narrative skills (section 3.4), the focus of the present study.

3.1 Listening skills and comprehension

The area of listening skills has surprisingly not frequently been investigated in SA studies, and yet the findings indicate considerable gains for learners' listening development in short-term SA. Evans and Fisher (2005), for example, investigated secondary school

students of French (aged 13–14) who had only spent from six to eleven days in SA programs. They revealed that the students significantly improved their listening comprehension and that their listening improvement was surprisingly maintained two years after their return from the SA. A similar pattern of results has been observed by Llanes and Muñoz (2009; on Catalan-Spanish learners of English), Savage and Hughes (2014; American learners of Chinese), and Schenker (2018; on American university students of German), who all examined the effects of intensive summer programs (which lasted from three to six weeks) on L2 development. The authors consistently confirmed great benefits of SA experiences on listening skills and concluded that increased exposure to the L2, especially in conversation with the host families, helped the participants improve their listening abilities. In their study of Japanese college students of English, Homano-Bunce, Murray, and Campbell (2019) reported that the students who had engaged in a fifteen-week SA program achieved greater gains in listening comprehension, compared with their peers who had stayed at home in Japan. Moreover, based on the SA students' data obtained from interviews and diaries, the authors revealed the importance of spoken interaction not only with native-speakers but also with non-native speakers to improve L2 listening abilities. The students, who made significant progress in their listening while abroad, reported that they had interaction with other non-native speakers from different countries more frequently than with native-speakers of English as it was "easier," "less stressful,"

and “enjoyable” (p.121). Conroy (2018) investigated Chinese university students of English who participated in a six-week SA program, and the results from the listening pre- and post-dictation tests show the improvement in their ability to hear and transcribe phrasal verbs. Although this finding does not necessarily guarantee that the students understood the meaning of the verbs, Conroy (2018) argues that such an ability to notice and identify language features is indispensable in the developmental processes of listening comprehension ability. Finally, Cubillos, Chieffo, and Fan (2008) analyzed SA participants’ gains in listening skills from a cognitive perspective; they examined whether five-week SA experiences affected students’ listening strategies when confronted with comprehension challenges. The results from listening assessments and the Metacognitive Awareness Strategy Questionnaire (MASQ) reveal that the SA students applied top-down cognitive strategies (such as “predicting” and “summarizing”), the more sophisticated listening processing, whereas the AH peers used bottom-up cognitive strategies (such as “listening for specific words” and “identifying grammatical and phonological features”) when they approached listening tasks. The MASQ data also illustrate that the AH students frequently showed frustrations with L2 learning since they were likely to put too much focus on language features and as a result, they often felt it difficult to comprehend what they heard. The SA students, on the other hand, did not show frustrations but rather concentrated on understanding when faced with comprehension challenges.

3.2 General oral proficiency

Changes in oral proficiency have been the most frequently investigated in SA contexts where learners are exposed to and able to practice the target language (Ecke, 2014; Juan-Garau, 2015; Llanes, 2011; Llanes & Muñoz, 2013). Indeed, Magnan and Back (2007) reported, for example, that 60% of the undergraduate students (N=24) who participated in a semester-long French program showed significant improvement in the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI) of the American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL). In an investigation of 39 intermediate-level students of German, Lindseth (2010) also discovered that the students increased their oral proficiency after a semester-long SA program in Wittenberg, Germany. She found that more than 80% of the participants received higher scores on the OPI at the end of the program; among them, 63.2% improved one level, and 7% moved up two levels on the ACTFL scale. The findings of Lindseth's (2010) study were confirmed by Hernández (2016), who explored L2 Spanish development in 20 English-speaking learners who enrolled in a four-week program in Madrid, Spain. The data obtained from the Simulated Oral Proficiency Interview (SOPI), the speaking test that models the OPI, show that most of the participants improved at least one level on the ACTFL scale during the time spent abroad. The author further revealed that oral gains were more common for the novice- or intermediate-learners than for the advanced-learners, indicating that short-term SA might be more beneficial for

learners with lower proficiency levels in a target language. Segalowitz et al. (2004), Hernández (2010), and Jochum (2014) also suggest significant enhancement of the SA students' oral skills in comparison with their peers who studied the language in AH settings. Based on the post-OPI or SOPI, each study consistently reported that the rate of the SA students who had improved one or more proficiency levels was greater than that of the AH students. For example, Segalowitz et al. (2004) perceived that 53% of the SA students improved their oral proficiency level(s), while 28% of the AH students did the same. Hernández (2010) also reported that 80% of their SA students improved, compared with 25% of the AH students. Likewise, Jochum (2014) found that 78% of the SA students improved, compared with 44% of the AH students. Finally, Di Silvio, Donovan, and Malone (2014, 2015) revealed considerable gains in the SOPI ratings for college students learning one of three languages (Spanish, Mandarin, and Russian) after one semester abroad. The survey data further show a significant relationship between the students' oral proficiency gains and their positive feelings about their homestay experiences, which led the authors to conclude that learners' close engagement with their host families is one of the key factors that may facilitate oral development in the target language.

As seen above, the SA context indeed has some positive impacts on learners' enhancement in oral proficiency. It must be noted, however, that a short-term experience abroad does not always guarantee such benefits as some participants in previous studies

did not show oral improvement after SA (e.g., approximately 40% of the participants did not improve their oral proficiency in Magnan and Back [2007], 20% did not in Lindseth [2010], and 25% did not in Hernández [2016]). In this respect, as Juan-Garau (2015) states in her review of SA studies, learners should bear in mind that they still need to "seize" the speaking opportunities that the SA context affords in order to develop their oral proficiency. As suggested by Di Silvio, Donovan, and Malone (2014, 2015), one of the ways to do so may be to build a close relationship with the host families who can provide learners with rich opportunities to practice the target language on a daily basis.

3.3 Oral fluency, complexity, and accuracy

In the past three decades, a growing body of L2 research has examined learners' oral development in terms of *complexity, accuracy,* and *fluency* (henceforth, CAF), assuming that these three dimensions are fundamental components of oral proficiency in a target language. In these studies, complexity is commonly understood as the ability to use a wider range of grammatical structures and vocabulary; accuracy as the ability to produce native-like and error-free language; and fluency as the ability to produce the L2 speech smoothly, easily, and with limited numbers of pauses, hesitations, or reformulations. It has thus been believed that more proficient L2 learners are able to incorporate new L2 elements, modify L2 knowledge, and use L2 knowledge rapidly and automatically (Housen, Kuiken, & Vedder, 2012; Leonard & Shea, 2017; Michel, 2017). Not

surprisingly, given that CAF dimensions are able to characterize different aspects of oral performance, more researchers in recent years have used these dimensions to measure how and to what extent learners improve their L2 speaking abilities during SA.

Research on the effects of the SA context has most frequently examined and consistently supported participants' improvement in oral fluency. Baró and Serrano (2011), for example, investigated oral fluency levels of Spanish- or Catalan-speaking students before and after their two- or three-month stays in the UK. The data obtained from the story-telling task showed a significant increase in their means of syllable per minute after the SA experiences. Likewise, Di Silvio, Diao, and Donovan (2016) compared improvements in oral fluency among 75 students learning different languages (e.g., Mandarin, Russian, and Spanish) and found that, regardless of their target language, the participants made substantial gains in oral fluency (as measured by their rate of speech and mean length of run [the average number or syllables produced between pauses]) after a semester-long SA. Mora and Valls-Ferrer's (2012) study of 30 Catalan-Spanish undergraduate students of English also confirmed that a three-month SA period had a greater impact on the participants' fluency than two-terms of formal instruction (40 hours per term) at home in Barcelona, Spain. The participants appeared to speak faster and produced longer speech runs with fewer and shorter pauses while increasing their complexity levels in the post-SA assessment. These results were comparable to those

reported by Freed, Segalowitz, and Dewey (2004), Segalowitz et al. (2004), D'Amico (2012), and Llanes and Muñoz (2009, 2013) since they suggest once more that SA students become able to produce more "smooth" speech than their AH peers: their SA participants consistently showed greater increase in their speech rate and average length of fluent runs while decreasing their unfilled pauses.

The question, however, remains regarding the factor that affects oral fluency development within the SA context. Freed, Segalowitz, and Dewey (2004), who compared 28 students of French in three different learning settings (AH, SA, and intensive summer immersion or IM) suggest that the amount of hours per week spent using the target language correlates with an improvement in oral fluency. Their data from oral interviews showed that the IM group who reported significantly more hours in speaking and writing activities outside of class obtained more gains in oral fluency than the other two groups (IM>SA>AH). However, the studies by Segalowitz et al. (2004), D'Amico (2012), and Quan (2016) challenged this finding by confirming that none of the correlations between the reported amount of language use in the SA context and the participants' improvement in oral fluency were significant. For D'Amico (2012), the finding suggests that it is not the "quantity" of communication but the "quality" of communication that should be considered more in order to enhance learners' oral fluency within the SA environments.

As to syntactic and lexical complexity in oral productions, previous studies have also described the strong tendency for SA students to obtain significant gains and even to outperform AH students in the post-test. As an illustration, Serrano, Llanes, and Tragant (2011) and Baró and Serrano (2011) investigated participants' syntactic complexity by calculating the number of clauses per T-unit (CL/TU) and their lexical complexity according to Guiraud's Index of Lexical Richness (GUI): word types divided by the square root of the total number of tokens (Types/√Tokens) before and after their SA experiences. The results consistently show the increase in both measures in the post-test, indicating their improvements in syntactic and lexical complexity after SA. The study by Llanes and Muñoz (2013), which compared the effects of SA and AH contexts in Spanish child and adult learners of English, perceived more gains in oral complexity in SA students compared with their AH counterparts, as measured by their CL/TU and GUI.

In contrast to the findings regarding the gains in oral fluency and complexity, contradictory results have been reported in terms of accuracy improvement. While several researchers have discovered that the SA context was not necessarily beneficial for the improvement of oral accuracy (e.g., Arnett, 2013; Baró & Serrano, 2011; Isabelli-Garcia, 2010; Serrano, Llanes, & Tragant, 2011), authors such as Llanes and Muñoz (2009, 2013), Juan-Garau (2014), and Izmaylova-Culpepper and Olovson (2017) have observed significant gains. In the studies by Serrano, Llanes, and Tragant (2011) and Baró and

Serrano (2011), advanced-level SA students of English showed more increase in oral fluency and complexity but not in accuracy (according to the rate of their errors per T-unit [E/TU]), compared with their peers in an AH programs. Based on the data of students who studied abroad for two months or three months, Baró and Serrano (2011) further suggest that an additional month abroad is not long enough to develop learners' oral accuracy since there were no clear differences in the gains made by these two groups. Isabelli-Garcia (2010) also examined students' morphological accuracy using the grammatical judgment test and found that the four-month SA experience did not have much benefit over the AH learning experience for the acquisition of Spanish gender markings. Similarly, Arnett (2013) compared the grammatical accuracy rate in SA students who went to Germany with those who took an equivalent German course on campus at home. While the SA students produced significantly more words than the AH students on the post-test, the data gathered from the picture retelling tasks showed no advantage of the SA over the AH context in the acquisition of accusative and dative case. Llanes and Muñoz (2009, 2013), Juan-Garau (2014), and Izmaylova-Culpepper and Olovson (2017) reported, however, that their participants increased the oral accuracy rate after their SA experiences (as measured by means of the ratio of error-free clauses, the average number of error per clause, the number of word order errors, and agreement errors). In contrast to the findings in Baró and Serrano (2011), Llanes and Muñoz's (2009) results further show the significant differences

between the students in a three-week and a four-week SA groups in terms of the accuracy measures. For them, this finding suggests that even a week of difference in the target language environment had positive impacts for improvement in their participants' oral accuracy. Taking the results together, Baró and Serrano (2011) speculate that such contradictory findings might be attributed to the differences in participants' pre-departure proficiency levels; that is, learners with a lower proficiency are likely to attain benefits more from SA experiences in terms of oral accuracy than those who have a higher proficiency.

All in all, it can be said that SA contexts have positive influences on learners' oral skills, especially in terms of fluency and syntactic and lexical complexity. With regard to oral *accuracy*, however, the impact of SA is still inconclusive; thus, more empirical studies are indeed crucial. Furthermore, the contradictory findings reported by Freed, Segalowitz, and Dewey (2004), Segalowitz et al. (2004), and D'Amico (2012) also indicate the need for further investigations of the factors affecting fluency development within SA settings.

3.4 Narrative task used for evaluating children's language development

For children, being able to tell stories and describe things clearly to make themselves understood requires a great deal of social interactions. This is often referred to as having *storytelling* or *narrative ability*, which develops over time from early childhood through adolescence. While children generally acquire this ability naturally, it is often

considered as a complex skill, given that they must understand contexts, construct meaningful utterances (using relevant vocabulary and grammatical knowledge), and describe logical relationships between events in order to tell a story effectively (Cohen, Bauer, & Minniear, 2021; Karlsen et al., 2021; Reilly et al., 2004). Indeed, previous studies of monolingual and bilingual children have indicated that narrative ability plays an important role in the later development of listening and reading comprehension (Griffin, Hemphill, Camp, & Wolf, 2004; Karlsen et al., 2021; Kim, Park, & Park, 2015), lexical and syntactic knowledge (Balaban & Hohenberger, 2020; Karlsen et al., 2021; Nakamura, 2009; Reilly et al., 2004), and communicative skills (Mokhtar, Halim, & Kamarulzaman, 2011) in their L1 or L2.

Narrative ability has been commonly studied in the field of child language development. These studies, including the ones described above, often elicited narratives from children by using a picture-elicitation task where children were asked to tell a story from wordless picture books or from some pictures in target languages. In their comprehensive review of the literature on child narrative development, Cohen, Bauer, and Minniear (2021) note that the use of wordless picture books is particularly helpful to capture children's narrative proficiency as they allow researchers to see children's understanding of the story as well as their ability to construct the story using their existing linguistic knowledge. Heilmann, Rojas, Iglesias, and Miller (2016) also suggest the

benefits of using wordless picture books for evaluating children's oral language development as their bilingual participants used a wider range of vocabulary in the picture book storytelling task than in traditional vocabulary assessments.

Narratives elicited from such picture-elicitation tasks are usually examined at two levels: story structure (i.e., macrostructure) and linguistic structure (i.e., microstructure). Story structure is concerned with the ability to describe how events of the story are related to each other and to the overarching theme of the story, whereas linguistic structure refers to linguistic knowledge at the word and sentence levels (Cohen, Bauer, & Minniear, 2021; Karlsen et al., 2021). Previous studies have indicated the relationship between these two measures, suggesting that the complexity of story structure is reflected through the complexity of linguistic structure (Balaban & Hohenberger, 2020; Lucero, 2015; Nakamura, 2009, 2019; Reilly et al., 2004). For instance, Lucero (2015) found in her study of bilingual children that the children's story structure score (or, in her words, macrolevel discourse score) was predicted by their vocabulary within both languages. Nakamura (2019), who investigated Japanese learners of English, also reported the tendency for the learners with limited English vocabulary to end up not being able to describe the story in detail. Likewise, Reilly et al. (2004), Nakamura (2009), and Balaban and Hohenberger (2020) found that children's ability to structure the story was related to their syntactic

development – children who were able to compose grammatically more complex sentences tended to provide more elaborated descriptions in their construction of a narrative.

Not surprisingly, given that narratives provide a wide range of information about one's linguistic knowledge, some researchers, in the last ten years, started to use picture-elicitation tasks to investigate the effects of intensive language immersion on narrative development (e.g., Baró & Serrano, 2011; Llanes & Muñoz, 2009, 2013; Llanes & Serrano, 2017; Quay & Kano, 2015; Serrano, Llanes, & Tragant, 2011). For example, as mentioned in sections 2.3 and 3.3, Baró and Serrano (2011) and Llanes and her colleagues (Llanes & Muñoz, 2009, 2013; Llanes & Serrano, 2017; Serrano, Llanes, & Tragant, 2011) examined changes in their participants' narrative performance after their short SA at the linguistic structure level. The studies consistently showed an increase in lexical and syntactic complexity and fluency, but not necessarily in accuracy (for further details, see sections 2.3 and 3.3). Quay and Kano (2015) explored the effectiveness of one-month residence abroad for developing Japanese-English bilingual siblings' narrative ability in their weaker language, English, at both linguistic and story structure levels. They used Mayer's (1969) wordless picture book, *Frog, where are you?* – the book that has been commonly used in the reviewed studies of narrative development (e.g., Balaban & Hohenberger, 2020; Cohen, Bauer, & Minniear, 2021; Heilmann et al., 2016; Karlsen et al., 2016; Lucero, 2015; Nakamura, 2009, 2019; Reilly et al., 2004) – to elicit the

children's narratives before and after their short RA experiences. The results demonstrated clear benefits of the one-month residence abroad for increasing the children's linguistic skills, namely vocabulary and morphosyntax. However, not much improvement was found at the story structure level after their short residence abroad; while the children became able to provide more descriptions of events in the story, they did not or could not elaborate by giving more details about characters nor express the narrator's attitudes towards the perspective of characters or events in their post-RA narrations. These studies speak to the possibility of the effectiveness of spending time abroad for increasing narrative ability, particularly at the linguistic structure level. Yet, as far as I am aware, the impact of short *residence abroad* on narrative development in *L2 learners* remains underexplored and is open to further investigation.

This chapter has reviewed the literature on the effectiveness of spending time abroad for L2 learning. It focused primarily on the studies that investigated the effects of short-term SA on listening skills and comprehension, general oral proficiency, and oral CAF, all of which are related to narrative ability, the focus of this research. Overall, the literature has indicated the benefits of short-term SA for increasing listening (comprehension) skills, general oral proficiency, fluency, and complexity, but not necessarily for accuracy. Furthermore, although narrative ability is the fundamental oral

language skill, it became clear that we still know very little about the impact of intensive language immersion on narrative development.

While RA and SA share the same target language immersion context, RA does not involve formal instruction. Despite the growing interest in participating in RA programs among young L2 learners (as mentioned in section 1.1), the effectiveness of such learning contexts for L2 improvement has not been explored. Hence, to investigate this gap, the next chapter provides details of the participants, the RA program, and the methodology used in collecting and analyzing their narrative data in English.

CHAPTER 4

Methodology

4.1 Recruitment of participants

In order to investigate how well Japanese pre-adolescents can narrate a story in English after one month's residence abroad and how early learners must start to learn an L2 to benefit from a RA experience, participants were recruited from LABO Teaching Information Center (henceforth, LABO) where they learned English language (and sometimes other languages) implicitly through songs, poems, and stories once a week for two hours. Fifty-five (21 males and 34 females) junior high school students (aged 12–14, M=12.8), who had started learning English at LABO at the age of 6 or earlier, participated in this study. None had had previous RA experience, and only three participants had been overseas as tourists (for 5–7 days) with their family. The present study collected data from these students before and after they participated in a one-month RA program organized by LABO in the United States or Canada in the summers of 2017–2019.

The RA program investigated in the study has a long history started in 1972 when LABO provided 179 students with one-month homestay experiences in the United States during the summer vacation. Since then, LABO has been sending its students to different

countries (such as the United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, China, and South Korea) every summer, and the total number of students engaging in the program has reached over 53,000 in 2019[2]. The major goal of LABO and its RA program is to develop children's awareness of other languages and cultures and thus of their own. The focus is on *experiencing* languages rather than *studying* languages. Hence, unlike typical SA programs (such as the ones that have been investigated in the studies reviewed in section 2.3 and Chapter 3), LABO's RA program does not offer formal language instruction to its students but emphasizes the importance of learning the target language and culture naturally through living with a local homestay family. The program is designed mainly for junior high school students, whom LABO considers to be at the stage of development where they start to be able to live apart from their family, adjust to a new environment, actively learn the target language and culture, and reflect on their learning experiences. Students who are interested in the program need to discuss with their parents, have an interview with their LABO tutors, and decide whether to apply for the program a year in advance. Applicants are required to have been enrolled at LABO for more than two years and attend all orientations (as described in section 4.1.1) before they engage in a homestay experience (as described in section 4.1.2) (LABO, 2020).

[2] Unfortunately, LABO canceled its RA program in 2020 and 2021 due to the pandemic.

4.1.1 Pre-departure orientations

The participants took part in six monthly four-hour orientations, which were held at the district level prior to departure. These orientations were provided by experienced LABO tutors to improve the participants' English abilities as well as to prepare them to live away from home and stay with their host families. To achieve these aims, the participants engaged mainly in four activities in every session:

(1) *A potluck activity*, where each participant was asked to cook lunch, without the mother's or father's help, at home in the morning and bring it to share with others. Through this activity, the participants were expected to learn to appreciate their parents' support that they had previously taken for granted and increase their awareness of the importance of becoming independent from the parents.

(2) *An acting-out-a-story activity*, in which the participants worked together to act out an old Japanese tale in English to learn about their own culture and acquire new vocabulary as well as expressions in English.

(3) *A gift-making activity*, where the participants prepared three gifts for their host families to build good relationships with them. All participants were encouraged to make a self-introduction photo album which introduces themselves, their family, friends, and school life in Japan; create a research poster (or research notes) on Japanese culture in

English; choose one favorite story and memorize it in English (so that they can recite it for their host families during their homestay).

(4) *A case-study activity*, where the participants were given specific cases and asked to work in groups to establish appropriate ways to react to the situations. For example, they were asked questions such as: *"what would you do if you feel lonely because you cannot communicate well with your host family in English?", "what would you do if your host sister or brother keeps playing video games and never talks to you?",* and *"who would you talk to first if your host parents ask you to pay for your meals (even though the program is supposed to include meals)?"*. Through this activity, the participants became able to develop realistic expectations for the upcoming homestay experiences and gain skills to deal with challenges they may encounter while abroad.

Additionally, all participants attended two orientation camps: one is the national orientation camp held in December and the other is the district orientation camp held in June. These camps were organized by LABO staff, tutors, and chaperones in order to deepen the participants' understanding of the program, ease their pre-departure anxiety, and get them well prepared and oriented for the forthcoming homestay experiences. At each camp, they were given opportunities to review the program policies and safety guidelines, talk with past RA students, share their concerns with other participants, and

discuss the common issues associated with the RA experiences (such as *homesickness, culture shock,* and *religious customs*).

The researcher of this study observed all orientation sessions (held in Shizuoka prefecture from December 2017 to June 2018) and the district orientation camp (held in Aichi prefecture in June 2018) after approval from the LABO Chubu district office.

4.1.2 Homestay settings

All participants stayed with volunteer homestay families who had a child of the same sex and similar age (within two years) and had no other foreigners living with them. These families had been carefully selected by the LABO's local partner organizations based on their ability to provide a safe, clean, and friendly home for the participants: homestay coordinators had visited and assessed their homes and interviewed every member of the families to ensure their motivation and suitability for hosting a LABO student. They were middle- to upper-middle class and mostly lived in rural areas where the participants had little or no chance of meeting other LABO students or native speakers of Japanese. Pre-arrival orientations were held by the local partner organizations for the homestay families to help them better understand the goal of the program and how each host is expected to welcome the students into their family. An emphasis was placed on the importance of speaking English with the students, treating them as a family member – not as a guest – and integrating them into all family activities. The participants were placed

individually with the host families for one month, and matches were made based on the participants' information on their lifestyle habits, hobbies, and interests and the hosts' preferences. While in homestay, they did not attend a school but just spent time with their host families experiencing daily life in the host country; they had three meals a day together with their hosts, helped with the family chores, played with the host siblings and local friends, visited the hosts' relatives, and went on outings and shopping trips with the hosts. English was the only language used at home for 52 participants, while three participants indicated that English and one additional language (such as Mandarin, Tagalog, and Italian) was used (to a small extent) at home. All participants were not allowed to contact their families and friends back home in Japan to limit their use of Japanese, prevent or reduce homesickness, and foster a sense of belonging and a relationship with their host families. Japanese–English bilingual chaperones contacted the participants and their host families three times during the program (i.e., at the beginning, middle, and end of the program) to monitor the welfare of the participants and ensure that there are no issues; and, for most participants, this was practically the *only* exposure they had to Japanese while in homestay.

4.2 Data collection

The researcher met participants at the LABO classroom approximately one month in advance of data collection to: (a) explain the purpose of the study, (b) describe the

method, (c) answer their questions, and (d) reassure them of the confidentiality and anonymity of the study. At the end of the meetings, all potential participants were given an informed consent form (see Appendix A) and asked to return it with their parents' signature if they decided to volunteer to be a part of the study. Fifty-eight students agreed to participate in this study, but three dropped out in the second round of testing due to schedule conflicts and were thus removed from the analyses.

This study has a pre-/post-test design. The participants were asked to complete the picture-elicitation narrative task (as described in section 4.3) to evaluate their narrative skills in English within two weeks before their departure to English-speaking countries. The posttest administration of the same instrument was conducted within ten days after their return[3]. Each session took approximately ten minutes to carry out, and all assessment sessions were conducted individually in English at the LABO classroom or the tutor's place by the researcher. The assessments were all audio-recorded, with the approval of participants and their parents, and then fully transcribed by the researcher before analysis.

This research design (including the participant recruitment procedure) was authorized and approved by the Research Ethics Committee at International Christian University (see Appendix B).

[3] It should be noted here that to minimize the effects of pretest sensitization, the participants were not informed about the focus of the task nor that they would be asked to complete the same task after their return to Japan.

4.3 Narrative task

4.3.1 Instrument

The wordless picture book, *Frog, where are you?* (Mayer, 1969) was used to elicit narrative descriptions from the participants before and after their month abroad. The book was selected as it has been used extensively and successfully in the fields of L1 and L2 acquisition to assess the narrative skills of participants of different ages and different languages (see section 3.4).

The book consists of twenty-four pictures (as shown below) and describes the story of a boy and a dog searching for their pet frog. It begins with the boy and his dog looking at their frog in a jar. During the night, while the boy and the dog are asleep, the frog escapes from the jar. The next morning, the boy and the dog discover that their frog is gone. At first, they search for the frog inside the boy's room, but they cannot find it. Then, they go outside to look for the frog. During their search, they encounter different animals (such as a mole, bees, an owl, and a deer) in the woods and experience various events (e.g., getting attacked by the mole, being chased by the bees and the owl, and being thrown off the cliff by the deer). They eventually find their runaway frog with his family near the pond. The story concludes as the boy and the dog leave for home with their frog.

Pictures from *Frog, where are you?* (Mayer, 1969)

Since the book contains no words, the participants were expected to describe the series of temporally sequenced events in their own words as well as to infer and convey characters' relationships, thoughts, feelings, and intentions throughout the story. In both pre- and post-abroad sessions, all participants were given some time to look through the book before and after they told the story in English.

4.3.2 Quantitative analyses

To obtain a whole picture of the effects of short-term RA on the participants' English narrative ability, their narrative data were first analyzed quantitatively in terms of *linguistic structure* (i.e., microstructure) and *story structure* (i.e., macrostructure), both of which serve as important elements of narrative production (Cohen, Bauer, & Minniear, 2021; Karlsen et al., 2016, 2021; Lucero, 2015; Nakamura, 2009, 2019; Norbury & Bishop, 2003; Reilly et al., 2004). The linguistic structure of narratives was coded on four aspects: *the total number of utterances*, *mean length of utterance* (or MLU in words, where the number of word tokens is divided by the total number of utterances), *lexical complexity* (as measured according to Guiraud's index or GUI, in which word types are divided by the square root of the total number of tokens), and *syntactic complexity* (as counted by the number of clauses per T-unit or CL/TU). As for story structure, the analysis focused on the participants' ability to "construct a hierarchical representation of the main story elements" (Norbury & Bishop, 2003, p. 288). Their narratives were coded based on the presence of

the following main plot elements of *Frog, where are you?* (Mayer, 1969) according to the episodic organization[4] (i.e., story grammar) and the following plot elements used in previous studies (Karlsen et al., 2016; Norbury & Bishop, 2003):

(1) *Orientation*, which provides information of character(s) and situation(s) (e.g., *The boy lives with his two pets, a dog and a frog*).

(2) *Onset*, which indicates a problem to be solved (e.g., *One night, the frog runs away*).

(3) *Discovery,* which presents the character's finding of the problem (e.g., *When the boy wakes up, he finds that his frog is gone*).

(4) *Searching indoors (attempt),* which shows the character's attempt to find the frog *inside* the house (e.g., *The boy searches for his frog in his boots; the dog looks in a jar, and then he becomes stuck in the jar*).

(5) *Adventures outside (attempt and outcome),* which describes the character's attempt to find the frog *outside* the house and its outcome (e.g., *The boy looks for his frog in a hole, but a mole comes out; Because the dog looks in a hive, the bees get angry at the dog; The boy meets an owl and gets chased by the owl*).

[4] Episodic organization is derived from story grammar analysis. It consists of the following six elements: *Setting* (which provides the information of characters and states), *complication* (which presents an event that initiates the character's action), *motivating state* (which describes thoughts or emotion of the characters), *attempts* (which show the character's action resulting from motivating state), *consequence* (which is outcome of attempts), and *reaction* (which conveys the character's feeling resulting from prior condition) (for more details, see Ukrainetz, 2006).

(6) *Resolution,* which presents a resolution of the problem (e.g., *The boy and the dog find the frog near the pond*).

(7) *Ending,* which clearly describes the last scene where the boy brings his runaway frog (or a substitute) back to his home (e.g., *The boy takes his frog back, saying good-bye to the frog's family*).

Following the scoring system suggested by Norbury and Bishop (2003) and Karlsen et al. (2016), the participants received one point for including each plot element. Additionally, two points were awarded if the participant mentioned two or more events from the 'Adventures outside' category. Hence, a total of eight points could be obtained on the story structure measure.

After coding the narrative data, the present study used a linear mixed model available in the lme4 package (Bates et al., 2015) in R (R Core Team, 2021) to examine whether there were differences between the participants' story structure scores in the pre- and post-abroad sessions. I also conducted paired samples t-tests to ascertain differences between the participants' scores on each linguistic measure before and after their short RA. Lastly, this study used a generalized linear model in R (R Core Team, 2021) to investigate whether the participants' starting age of learning English at LABO affected their gains during their short residence in the United States or Canada.

4.3.3 Qualitative analyses

To see how well each participant narrated the story after their short stay in the English-speaking country, further analysis of the story construction included qualitative comparisons of the pre- and post-abroad narratives. More specifically, did the participants describe the events of the story or the behaviors of the characters in a temporal and causal order and expressed the characters' inner states in their narratives?

The participants' narrative performance was examined at two levels – referential and evaluative – as originally presented by Labov and Waletzky (1967), who stated that a 'good' narrative has: (1) *referential* function, which refers to the expression of events in sequenced clauses that reflect their temporal order, and (2) *evaluative* function, which gives meaning to the story by revealing the narrator's perspective and understanding of the events (such as why an event occurs and how it affects a character) and the characters (such as how a character feels towards events or other characters). As was done in previous research (e.g., Balaban & Hohenberger, 2020; Nakamura, 2009, 2019; Reilly et al., 2004), the present study also used Labov and Waletzky's (1967) 'referential' and 'evaluative' concepts to analyze and compare the participants' narrative production before and after their short-term experience abroad.

In comparing the participants' pre- and post-abroad narratives, this study also focused on the vocabulary and complex syntax used in their utterances as both lexical and

syntactic knowledge are requisite skills for producing a good narrative. Reilly et al. (2004) note that the narrators must lexically encode information about the characters and events of the story and are also required to use morphosyntactic devices (including coordinating and subordinating conjunctions) appropriately to clarify the sequence of events and their temporal or causal relations. Again, as was done in other studies (e.g., Balaban & Hohenberger, 2020; Quay & Kano, 2015; Reilly et al., 2004), I closely looked at how vocabulary and syntax differ in the post-abroad narratives versus the pre-abroad ones. Specifically, with regard to the coding of complex syntax, the participants' utterances were analyzed as to whether they were simple sentences involving a subject and a predicate, or complex sentences consisting of two or more clauses. Passive sentences were also taken into consideration when analyzing syntactic complexity.

This chapter explained the details of the participants and the RA program investigated in this study as well as of the material used to collect narrative data. The use of Mayer's (1969) wordless picture book, *Frog, Where are You?* provides a look at the impact of one-month RA on the participants' English narrative ability at both story structure and linguistic structure levels. It also allows for detailed analysis of how well individual participants constructed narratives after their month abroad. The results obtained from analyzing the participants' narrative performance will be presented in the following chapters – Chapter 5 for quantitative analyses and Chapter 6 for qualitative analyses.

CHAPTER 5

Narrative Development:

Results and Discussion from the Quantitative Analyses

This chapter presents the results and discussion from the quantitative analyses of narrative data obtained from the participants before and after their one-month residence abroad. It consists of three sections. The first two sections are framed primarily as answers to the first research question related to the effects of the one-month residence abroad on the participants' narrative ability. Specifically, section 5.1 provides the findings on the participants' story structure development, whereas section 5.2 presents the findings on their linguistic structure development after residence abroad. The last section is framed primarily as an answer to the second research question concerning age effects on the participants' narrative development in the RA context.

5.1 Story structure

Before analyzing the participants' narrative data, the present study divided the participants into three groups – High, Middle, and Low – based on their story structure scores in the post-abroad session. Fourteen participants who scored 7 or 8 points in the post-abroad session were categorized into the High group, whereas the participants with 4–

6 points (N=14) were placed in the Middle group, and those with 1–3 points (N=27) were categorized into the Low group. Examining narrative descriptions from the participants within each group (rather than from the participants as a whole) allows for detailed analyses of the effects of short-term residence abroad on their narrative development.

Table 5.1 shows the participants' raw scores on the story structure scale in the pre- and post-abroad sessions, along with their age at which they engaged in this study and their starting age of learning English at LABO. It is organized according to the participants' post-abroad story structure scores, showing that the first 14 participants (H1–H14) are the ones placed in the High group, the next 14 participants (M15–M28) are in the Middle group, and the last 27 participants (L29–L55) are in the Low group.

As shown in Table 5.1, the impact of the one-month residence abroad on the participants' story structure ability seems generally positive as the total mean score increased in the post-abroad session to 4.31 (*SD* = 2.38) from 3.09 (*SD* = 2.19). Improvements appeared to be more drastic for the participants in the High and Middle groups than in the Low group as the High- and Middle-group participants were more likely than the Low-group participants to increase their scores from the pre- to post-abroad sessions. Specifically, in the High group, 71% of the participants (N=10) improved their scores; 22% of the participants (N=3) maintained their scores (note that two of these participants – H8 and H9 – already had the highest possible score in the pre-abroad

Table 5.1

The participants' raw scores on the story structure scale before and after the one-month residence abroad

Part	Age	SAL	Pre	Post	Gains
H1	12;5	3;6	4	8	+4
H2	12;5	3;11	5	8	+3
H3	13;0	3;8	5	8	+3
H4	12;9	4;2	5	8	+3
H5	13;3	2;8	6	8	+2
H6	12;5	3;9	6	8	+2
H7	13;2	3;2	7	8	+1
H8	12;8	4;6	8	8	0
H9	14;2	4;2	8	8	0
H10	14;1	3;0	3	7	+4
H11	13;7	4;4	4	7	+3
H12	12;5	5;0	5	7	+2
H13	12;4	4;6	7	7	0
H14	12;6	4;4	8	7	-1
M15	13;1	4;2	2	6	+4
M16	13;3	3;3	3	6	+3
M17	12;7	2;11	4	6	+2
M18	12;5	4;0	5	6	+1
M19	12;5	5;5	5	6	+1
M20	13;3	4;5	2	5	+3
M21	12;7	4;2	4	5	+1
M22	12;5	4;5	4	5	+1
M23	13;1	5;8	5	5	0
M24	12;5	6;2	1	4	+3
M25	12;6	4;4	2	4	+2
M26	12;7	5;6	3	4	+1
M27	13;4	3;3	3	4	+1
M28	12;5	4;5	4	4	0
L29	13;2	6;6	0	3	+3
L30	14;0	5;9	0	3	+3
L31	12;5	5;6	1	3	+2
L32	13;2	4;2	2	3	+1
L33	12;7	6;2	2	3	+1
L34	12;6	6;6	2	3	+1
L35	12;5	5;9	2	3	+1
L36	12;10	4;8	3	3	0
L37	13;3	6;4	4	3	-1
L38	12;5	6;2	4	3	-1
L39	12;5	4;11	0	2	+2
L40	12;4	5;2	0	2	+2
L41	13;1	5;5	1	2	+1
L42	12;6	3;6	1	2	+1
L43	12;5	6;9	1	2	+1
L44	13;2	5;6	1	2	+1
L45	12;8	5;2	1	2	+1
L46	12;6	5;9	1	2	+1
L47	12;4	5;5	2	2	0
L48	13;3	4;5	2	2	0
L49	12;6	4;4	3	2	-1
L50	12;5	5;6	3	2	-1
L51	12;5	5;2	3	2	-1
L52	12;6	6;8	0	1	+1
L53	12;7	4;11	1	1	0
L54	12;5	6;0	1	1	0
L55	12;9	5;6	1	1	0
Mean	12;8	4;8	3.09	4.31	1.22
SD	0.46	1.08	2.19	2.38	1.37

Note. Part = participant (Group [H = High, M = Middle, L = Low] + Number); Age = age at which participants engaged in the present study (Year;Month); SAL = participants' starting age of LABO (Year;Month); Pre = pretest; Post = posttest; Gains = gains from pre- to post-test story structure scores

session); only one participant, H14, decreased her score by 1 point from the highest possible score after the short-term residence abroad. Likewise, in the Middle group, 86% of the participants (N=12) increased their scores, while 14% of the participants or 2 participants – M23 and M28 – stayed the same after their month abroad. By comparison, the percentage of the participants who maintained or decreased their scores after their short residence abroad was higher in the Low group: 22% of the participants (N=6) stayed the same, 19% of the participants (N=5) had lower scores, and 59% of the participants (N=27) increased their scores in the post-abroad session.

To confirm whether there was a significant change in the participants' story structure scores after the short-term residence abroad and to see if the degree of improvement statistically differs between the groups, this study used a linear mixed model available in the lme4 package (Bates et al., 2015) in R (R Core Team, 2021). The model used the story structure score as a dependent variable while Test type (pre-test and post-test) and Group (High, Middle, and Low) were fixed effects. The intercept was set to 'post-test' for the Test type variable and 'High group' for the Group variable. Table 5.2 provides the results from the linear mixed model analysis, which are graphically displayed in Figure 5.1.

Table 5.2

Change in the participants' story structure scores after the one-month residence abroad

	Estimate	**Std. Error**	***t***	***p***
Intercept	7.64	.28	26.83	<.001***
Test type (Pre-test)	-1.86	.40	-4.61	<.001***
Middle group	-2.63	.40	-6.56	<.001***
Low group	-5.42	.35	-15.44	<.001***
Test type (Pre-test): Middle group	.21	.57	.37	.71
Test type (Pre-test): Low group	1.19	.50	2.40	.02 *

Note. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$

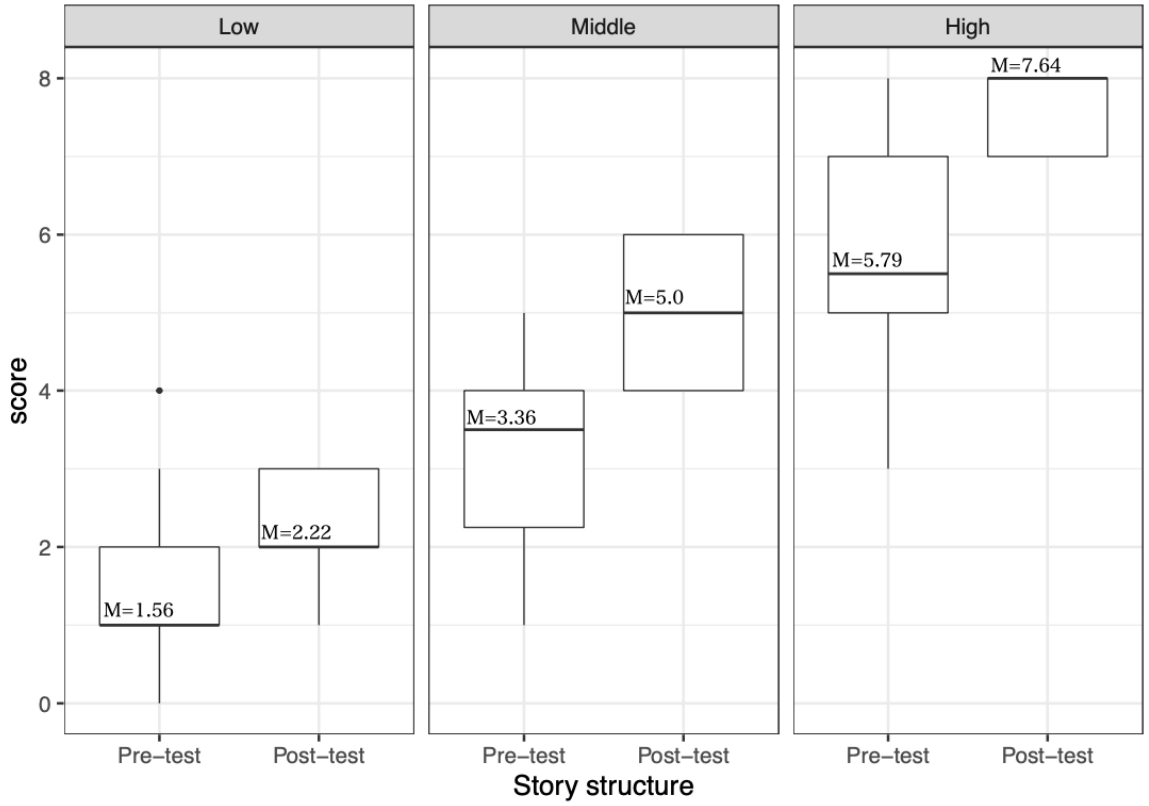

Figure 5.1 Change in the story structure scores of the participants in the High, Middle, and Low groups after their one-month residence abroad

As shown in Table 5.2, there was a significant effect of Test type on story structure score ($p < .001$), indicating that the participants did increase their scores from the

pre- to post-abroad sessions. The type of group also had a significant effect on the story structure scores in the post-abroad sessions: the High-group participants scored higher than the Middle-group participants ($p < .001$) and the Low-group participants ($p < .001$) after their short residence abroad. Table 5.2 further shows a significant difference in the pre-scores between the High and Low groups ($p = .02$) but not between the High and Middle groups ($p = .71$). This suggests that the amount of increase in scores significantly differs between the High and Low groups but not between the High and Middle groups. Indeed, Figure 5.1 illustrates clearly that the participants within each group generally increased their scores from the pre- to post-abroad sessions; however, the distribution of scores between the pre- and post-abroad sessions was greater for the participants in the High group (Pretest: $M = 5.79$, $SD = 1.63$; Posttest: $M = 7.64$, $SD = .50$) and Middle group (Pretest: $M = 3.36$, $SD = 1.28$; Posttest: $M = 5.0$, $SD = .88$) than for those in the Low group (Pretest: $M = 1.56$, $SD = 1.19$; Posttest: $M = 2.22$, $SD = .70$) (note that the outliers observed in the Low group indicate L37 and L38, who scored 4 points in the pre-abroad session but then decreased their scores by 1 point in the post-abroad session).

Since the improvements were less drastic for the Low-group participants (who generally scored lower in the pre-abroad session) than for the High- and Middle-group participants, learners may need a certain threshold level of proficiency for noticeable narrative improvement in a RA context. In contrast to my finding, Hernández (2016)

investigating undergraduate students in the four-week SA program had previously suggested bigger improvements for the students at the novice or intermediate level than for those at the advanced level in oral skills. Note, however, that university-aged students in that study would already have more years of education in the target language than the much younger children in my study.

5.2 Linguistic structure

As previously mentioned, the participants' narrative data were analyzed not only at the story structure level but also at the linguistic structure level. The linguistic structure of narratives was coded on the four aspects: (1) *the total number of utterances*, (2) *mean length of utterance* or *MLU in words*, where the number of word tokens is divided by the total number of utterances, (3) *lexical complexity*, which was measured according to Guiraud's index or GUI (in which word types are divided by the square root of the total number of tokens), and (4) *syntactic complexity,* which was counted by the number of clauses per T-unit or CL/TU.

Table 5.3 below provides the mean scores and standard deviations on each linguistic structure measure obtained by the High-, Middle-, and Low-group participants in the pre- and post-abroad sessions. As can be seen, on average, the participants in each group scored higher in all the measures after the one-month residence abroad, and the

High-group participants had the highest scores in each measure in both pre- and post-abroad sessions, followed by the Middle- and Low-group participants.

Table 5.3

The mean scores and standard deviations on the linguistic structure measures obtained by the High-, Middle-, and Low-group participants in the pre- and post-abroad sessions

	Pretest		**Posttest**	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
High group				
Total number of utterances	21.36	12.10	27.29*	9.29
Mean length of utterance (MLU)	7.45	1.87	7.68	1.39
Lexical complexity (GUI)	4.07	.69	4.84*	.47
Syntactic complexity (CL/TU)	1.09	.08	1.20*	.16
Middle group				
Total number of utterances	18	4.93	21.5*	5.17
Mean length of utterance (MLU)	4.50	1.86	5.57*	2.43
Lexical complexity (GUI)	3.48	.91	4.39*	.65
Syntactic complexity (CL/TU)	1.05	.11	1.10	.10
Low group				
Total number of utterances	13.37	6.42	17.15*	7.58
Mean length of utterance (MLU)	3.82	1.15	3.95	1.16
Lexical complexity (GUI)	3.02	.73	3.69*	.67
Syntactic complexity (CL/TU)	.97	.20	1.01	.03

Note. * = statistically significant result

Paired samples t-tests (α=.05) were conducted to confirm if the difference between the scores in the pre- and post-abroad sessions was significant for each of the groups. The t-tests revealed that the participants in all the three groups scored significantly

higher in the post-abroad session than in the pre-abroad session in two measures, namely the total number of utterances (High group: $t(13) = -2.63$, $p = .01$; Middle group: $t(13) = -4.15$, $p = .000$; Low group: $t(26) = -2.62$, $p = .01$) and lexical complexity (High group: $t(13) = -3.80$, $p = .001$; Middle group: $t(13) = -3.95$, $p = .001$; Low group: $t(26) = -3.59$, $p = .001$) (statistical significance is indicated by the asterisks in Table 5.3). The participants in the High group also experienced significant gains in syntactic complexity, $t(13) = -2.33$, $p = .02$, and those in the Middle group improved significantly in mean length of utterance, $t(13) = -2.40$, $p = .02$, after their short-term residence abroad. In contrast, the Low-group participants did not experience any significant change in either of these two measures from the pre- to post-abroad assessment sessions.

These results indicate that generally, the participants became able to produce more utterances, using a greater variety of vocabulary in their narratives after their one-month residence abroad. The High-group participants also showed a tendency to compose grammatically more complex sentences, while the Middle-group participants tended to make longer utterances in their post-abroad narratives. Unlike the participants in these two groups, however, the Low-group participants did not clearly make such syntactic gains. This suggests that while one month of naturalistic language immersion can enhance oral production and lexical complexity, it appears to have a smaller influence on syntactic complexity.

As mentioned earlier, previous studies have suggested the benefits of two- or three-month SA for undergraduate students (Baró & Serrano, 2011; Serrano, Llanes, & Tragant, 2011) and children (Llanes & Muñoz, 2013) in terms of lexical and syntactic development in oral skills. The present results showing lexical gains correspond to the findings of these SA studies, but they further suggest that pre-adolescents may also improve their lexical knowledge just by being naturally immersed in the target language for one month. With regard to syntactic gains, on the other hand, the results of this study are partially in contrast to the findings reported in the previous research as they suggest that a short RA experience may not necessarily guarantee syntactic improvements. A possible explanation for this is that the one-month period of language immersion may have been too short for some participants (such as the Low-group participants) to take advantage of their implicit learning mechanisms to increase their syntactic knowledge. It has been suggested that younger learners have superior qualities for implicit learning, which they can make good use of in a naturalistic immersion context. However, the literature has also indicated that implicit learning works slowly and requires some time (Muñoz, 2010; Muñoz & Spada, 2018). Thus, if the participants in this study had stayed longer (for example, two or three months, like the children in Llanes and Muñoz's [2013] study) in the host country, they might have made better use of their implicit learning qualities and achieved greater gains in syntactic skills. We can also surmise that the Low-group

participants were not able to achieve syntactic gains like the participants in the other two groups because they might not have reached a certain threshold of linguistic knowledge before they engaged in the short-term RA program.

Finally, the current results support the general view that the organization of narratives is reflected through linguistic complexity (Balaban & Hohenberger, 2020; Lucero, 2015; Nakamura, 2009, 2019; Reilly et al., 2004). The quantitative analyses of the participants' narrative production revealed that the participants generally became able to describe more plot elements (cf. section 5.1) by producing more utterances and using a wider variety of vocabulary after their short RA experience. Moreover, the High- and Middle-group participants, who showed greater improvements in their story structure scores (as discussed in section 5.1), also started to compose grammatically more complex sentences or produce longer utterances in their narratives after being abroad. These results suggest not only that the narrative organization is closely intertwined with linguistic complexity but also that short-term residence abroad can help to increase language proficiency and in turn enhance story structure ability in the target language.

5.3 Age effects

As mentioned earlier, while age has long been identified as the crucial theme in the area of L2 acquisition, its effects on L2 learning have received little attention in SA research (see Chapter 2). In fact, to the best of my knowledge, only a few studies exist that

investigate the SA learning contexts in relation to age. These studies (as reviewed in section 2.3) focused on the differences between children and adults (Llanes & Muñoz, 2013) or among children, adolescents, and adults (Llanes & Serrano, 2017; Muñoz & Llanes, 2014) and consistently showed that the SA contexts were more beneficial for younger learners in terms of oral improvements. Such findings have offered valuable insights into the effects of age at which learners engage in an SA program on their L2 gains in the SA context. Yet, the question remains open as to how early learners must start to learn an L2 to benefit from an intensive language immersion experience. In this section, we look at the starting age of learning English at LABO or the duration of prior learning experiences at LABO to determine whether this had an effect on the participants' gains in narrative ability after their RA experience. The information of the participants' starting age of LABO (M = 4;8, SD = 1.08) is provided in Table 5.1, and the length of their LABO attendance was calculated by subtracting their starting age of LABO from their age of participating in the RA program (M = 8.0, SD = 1.28) (also in Table 5.1).

Figure 5.2 presents a scatterplot for starting age of LABO (converted to months) and story structure score in the post-abroad session. As can be seen, there seemed to be a negative correlation between these two variables (r = -.64, p <.001), indicating that the participants who received English input from an earlier age at LABO tended to score higher on the story structure measure after they spent a month abroad. Figure 5.2 also

shows that those who gained the highest possible score (8 points) in the post-abroad session had started attending LABO at least before the age of 55 months, i.e., 4;6.

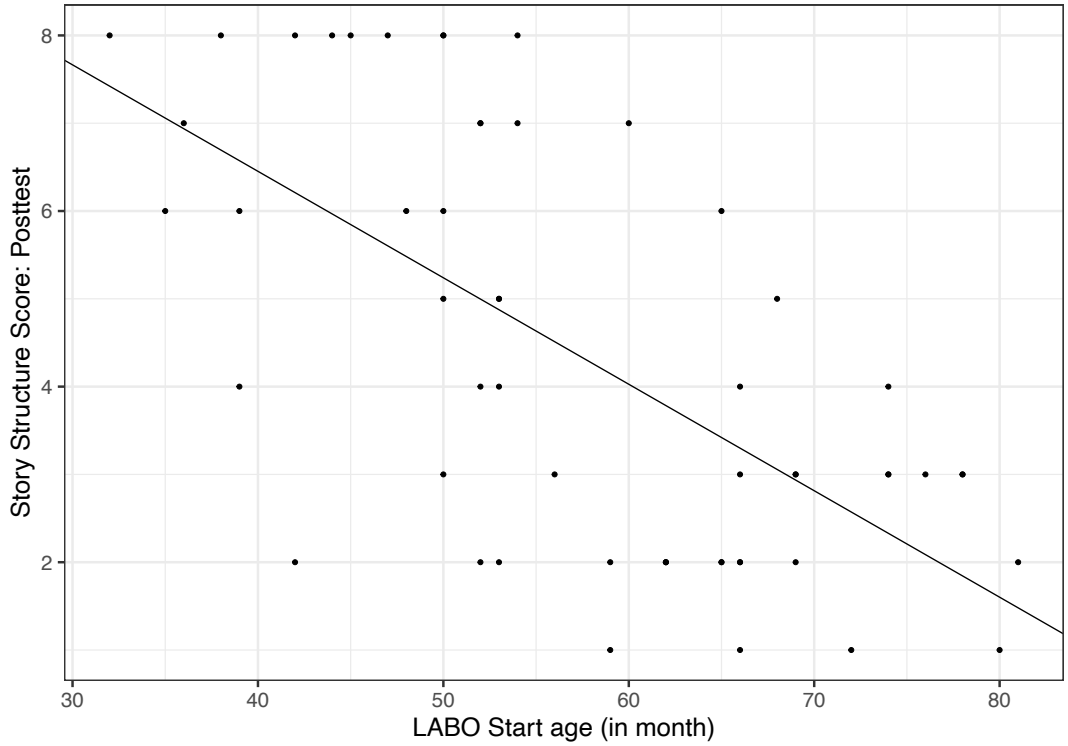

Figure 5.2 The negative correlation between the participants' starting age at LABO (in months) and their story structure scores in the post-abroad session

In like manner, Figure 5.3 illustrates the relationship between length of LABO attendance (converted to months) and story structure score in the post-abroad session. There is a positive correlation between these two variables ($r = .62$, $p < .001$), suggesting that the longer the participants had attended LABO, the higher they tended to score on the story structure measure after their short RA experience. It also indicates that the participants who received the full points in the post-abroad session had learned English at LABO at least for 97 months (i.e., 8 years and a month), before they took part in the one-month RA program.

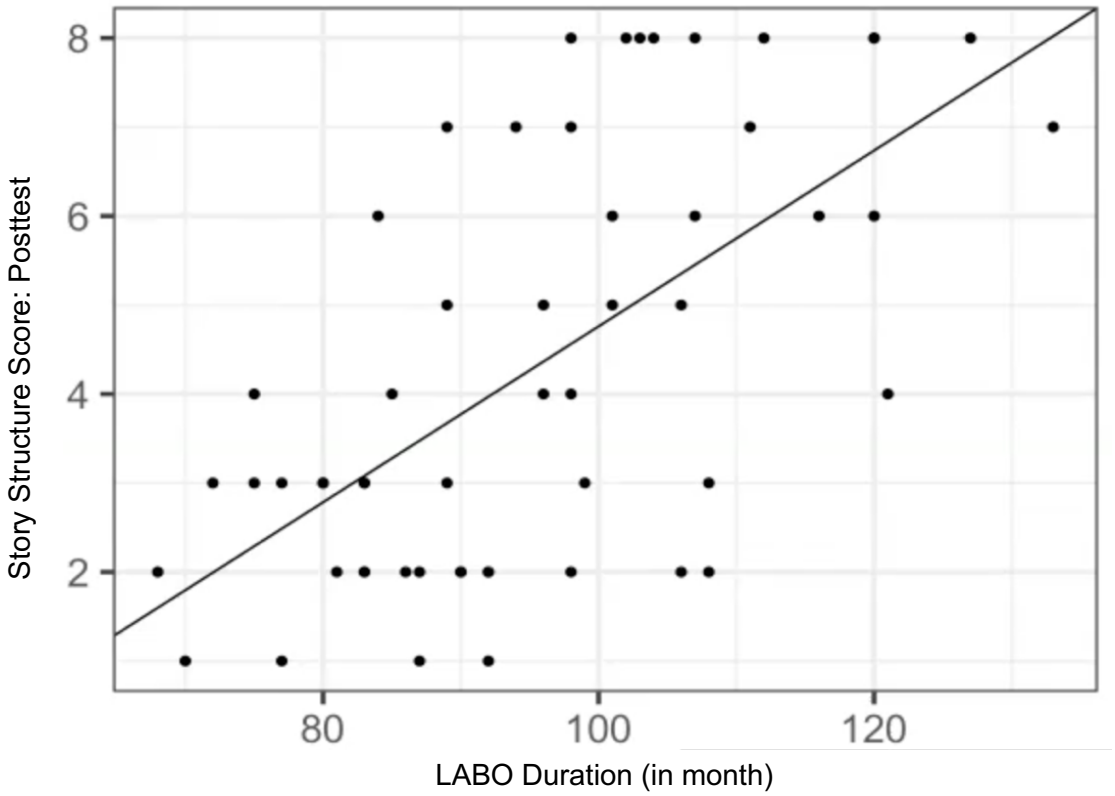

Figure 5.3 The positive correlation between the length of the participants' LABO attendance (in months) and their story structure scores in the post-abroad session

To confirm if the participants who began learning English from an earlier age at LABO or had attended LABO for a longer period achieved significantly greater gains in narrative ability after the short-term residence abroad, the present study used a generalized linear model available in R (R Core Team, 2021). Before running the model, I divided the participants into two groups according to their starting age of LABO: Early starters (the participants who started LABO before the age of 55 months or 4;6) and Late starters (those who started LABO after the age of 55 months or 4;6). They were also divided into either Long group or Short group, depending on whether they had learned English at LABO for longer or shorter than 97 months or about 8 years. Investigating whether there is a

significant difference in the post-story structure score between the groups (Early versus Late starters, and Long versus Short groups) helps us determine the effects of 'starting age of learning English' and 'length of English learning experiences' on their gains in narrative ability after a month abroad.

As shown in Table 5.4, the generalized linear model analysis revealed that the Early starters scored significantly higher than the Late starters on the story structure measure in the post-abroad session (p = .006). However, no such significant difference was found in the post-story structure score between the Long-group and Short-group participants (p = .55).

These results indicate that the starting age of learning English, rather than the length of English learning experiences, can predict the participants' narrative development in the RA context. That is, the participants who began learning English from an earlier age (or before 4;6) tended to score higher than those who started learning English from a later age (or after 4;6) on the story structure scale in the post-abroad session. The results may also suggest that the participants who started learning English from an earlier age were likely to benefit more from their one-month RA experience, given that the increase in story structure score was significantly larger for the participants who gained a higher score, i.e., the High- and Middle-group participants, than for those with a lower score in the post-abroad sessions, i.e., the Low-group participants (as discussed in section 5.1).

Table 5.4

The differences in the post-story structure score between the Early and Late starters and between the Long and Short groups

	Estimate	**Std. Error**	***t***	***p***
Intercept	5.99	.36	16.67	<.001***
Starting age of LABO (Late starters)	-2.70	.93	-2.90	.006**
Length of participation in LABO (Short group)	-.56	.94	-.60	.55

Note. *$p < .05$; **$p < .01$; ***$p < .001$; the intercept was set to 'Early starters' and 'Long group'

The findings presented above provide new insights into the role of age in L2 learning in an intensive language immersion context. As previously mentioned, past studies have suggested that *age of participation in an SA program* predicts L2 gains during SA, showing that younger learners tend to benefit more than older learners from such learning experiences (Llanes & Serrano, 2017; Llanes & Muñoz, 2013; Muñoz & Llanes, 2014). For instance, Llanes and Serrano (2017) found bigger improvements for children (aged 10–11) and adolescents (aged 12–15) than for adults (aged 19+) in oral skills as a result of a two-month period spent abroad. The present study demonstrated that the *actual starting age of L2 learning* also contributed to L2 development in the short-term language immersion context without formal instruction – the early starters were likely to achieve greater gains in narrative ability than the late starters after their one-month residence abroad.

There are two possible explanations for why the early starters tended to perform better in the narrative task in the post-abroad session. As mentioned earlier, the participants in this study learned English through songs, poems, and stories every week for two hours at LABO. Such regular contact they had with English through LABO activities from an early age may have served as a smooth introduction to their one-month stay in the English-speaking country and in turn helped them enhance their narrative development. Additionally, the fact that they learned English through listening and acting out various stories from an early age at LABO may have also contributed to the improvements in their story structure skills. With regard to this point, Hammer et al. (2012) and Karlsen et al. (2016) have emphasized that receiving L2 input implicitly through stories from a young age encourages children's narrative development in their L2. For example, in their longitudinal study of 66 kindergarten children learning Norwegian as an L2, Karlsen et al. (2016) revealed that both 'the number of children's books at home' and 'the amount of time children spent in kindergarten (where their teachers typically included storytelling activities in Norwegian as part of daily classroom routine)' predicted the children's narrative improvements in terms of story structure skills in Norwegian. In this study, the early starters tended to perform better than the late starters in the narrative task possibly because they had experienced the English language through learning a greater variety of

stories from an earlier age. Their richer learning experiences served as a basis for better story structure ability.

In sum, although it may be difficult to generalize the findings here due to the unique learning approach that LABO offered to the participants in my research, this study still sheds light on the possibility that starting L2 learning before age 5 help such children to benefit more from short-term language immersion experiences.

This chapter provided the results and discussion from the quantitative analyses of narrative data obtained from the participants before and after the short-term residence abroad. In the first two sections, we looked at the effects of the one-month residence abroad on the participants' narrative development in terms of story structure and linguistic structure skills. The results indicate that even one month of naturalistic immersion without any formal language instruction can encourage the development of narrative ability at both story structure and linguistic structure levels; however, it is not to the same degree for all participants. Moreover, as discussed in the last section, this study reveals that starting L2 learning early before age 5 may also contribute to L2 gains in an intensive language immersion context – early starters may be able to benefit more than late starters from participation in short-term language immersion programs.

In the next chapter, we will look more closely at the narrative data in order to further our understanding of *how well* individual participants became able to narrate a story in English after their one-month residence abroad.

CHAPTER 6

Narrative Development:

Results and Discussion from the Qualitative Analyses

The preceding chapter has provided a broad picture of the effectiveness of the short-term residence abroad for enhancing the participants' narrative development. In this chapter, we look at their narrative production *qualitatively* in order to give more in-depth answers to the first research question: how well can Japanese pre-adolescents narrate a story in English after a one-month residence abroad? Specifically, as mentioned in section 4.3.3, this chapter focuses on the changes in the participants' narrative performance at the *referential* and *evaluative* levels after their one-month RA experience. It also presents how their narrative production has changed *linguistically* from the pre- to post-abroad sessions.

The chapter consists of four sections. In the first three sections, we look closely at the participants' narrative data according to the groups they were placed in based on their post-abroad story structure score — the High, Middle, or Low groups (as explained in section 5.1). The last section summarizes the results presented in sections 6.1–6.3.

6.1 Narrative development in the High-group participants

The following two complete sets of narrative data show representative examples

of how the narrative production of the participants in the High group were improved after the one-month RA program. The narratives in Example 1 were produced by Soutaro (H10 in Table 5.1 in section 5.1), whose story structure score increased in the post-abroad session to 7 from 3, whereas Example 2 shows the narratives produced by Shota (H1 in Table 5.1), who increased his story structure score to 8 from 4 in the post-abroad session. In each narrative transcription, the utterance(s) classified as 'orientation' is underlined; 'onset' is double-underlined; 'discovery' is dashed-underlined; 'searching indoors' is in **boldface**; 'adventures outside' is in **boldface and underlined**; 'resolution' is in **boldface and double-underlined;** and 'ending' is wavy-underlined. Japanese utterances are highlighted in italics.

Looking at Example 1, it is evident that Soutaro produced a much longer narrative in the post-abroad session than in the pre-abroad session. He produced only three utterances and ended up telling the researcher *"chotto muri desu* [I can't do this anymore]*"* in his pre-abroad narrative, whereas, surprisingly, he produced twenty-one utterances and was able to include almost all the main plot elements in his narrative after he spent one month in the United States.

Example 1 (Soutaro; H10 in Table 5.1)
Pre-abroad session (story structure score: 3):
In the night, the frog run away. And in the morning, a boy find the frog. **He find, found in boots and coat frog.** He, he, he, *chotto muri desu*.

Post-abroad session (story structure score: 7):

A boy sat with a dog. One day, in the night, the boy and frog in the room. Then, he went to bed and sleep. However, frog run away. In the morning, a boy found a frog. **He found everywhere and called frog.** He thought that the dog ate frog. He called frog and went into the woods. **He found the frog in a hole. But this hole was built by skunk, so he got smell. The dog was falling the hive. And the boy was finding the tree and called frog. But this hole is built by owl. And the dog run away from bees. He was climbing the rock and find it. But he was found by deer.** There is a pond. He fell into pond. He hears something. And he says "shhh!" **He looked frog and, and got his frog.**

If we then closely look at his post-abroad narrative, we can find that Soutaro became able to recount the series of events in a temporal and causal order, using different connectors effectively. For example, in his first several utterances, Soutaro uses a sequence connector *"then"* to describe the boy's action in a temporal order (e.g., *One day, in the night, the boy and frog in the room. Then, he went to bed and sleep*) as well as a contrastive connector *"however"* to express the onset of an unexpected event that the boy's pet frog escapes while he is asleep (e.g., *Then, he went to bed and sleep. However, frog run away*). Moreover, the utterances such as *"He found the frog in a hole. But this hole was built by skunk, so he got smell"* illustrate how he effectively used a contrastive connector *"but"* to describe the unexpected outcome of the boy's action of searching for his frog, and a causal connector (or a subordinating conjunction) *"so"* to explain the reason why the boy gets attacked by a skunk during his search. Interestingly, after his short residence abroad, Soutaro also started to express the boy's internal state explicitly, using

one of the 'mental state verbs' *"thought"* in his utterance, *"He thought that the dog ate frog."* As Reilly et al. (2004) note, the narrator needs to articulate the sequence of temporally related events (i.e., referential components) as well as to infer and convey the causal relations between the events (i.e., evaluative components) in order to make the story more logical and meaningful. Nakamura (2009) has also emphasized the importance of using evaluative devices, which indicate the causal frameworks for the relationships between the sequenced events and the characters' emotional states, so as to create a more effective and coherent narrative that engages and maintains the listener's attention. The results where Soutaro began to produce the narrative with more referential and evaluative expressions in his post-abroad session may therefore indicate that he became able to compose a more complex yet coherent story in English after his four-week residence in the United States.

As mentioned earlier, the organization of narrative is reflected through the complexity of syntactic structure as the narrator generally needs to use grammatically complex sentences to express the temporal, causal, and logical order of events (Balaban & Hohenberger, 2020; Lucero, 2015; Nakamura, 2009, 2019; Reilly et al., 2004). In Soutaro's post-abroad narrative, we can also see that the improvement in his ability to structure the narrative (as discussed above) is related to his syntactic development. For example, using a causal connector (or a subordinating conjunction), Soutaro became able

to compose a complex sentence consisting of two clauses such as *"But this hole was built by skunk, so he got smell."* He was also able to express the character's inner thought effectively through composing a complex sentence using a relative pronoun such as *"He thought that the dog ate frog."* Moreover, in his post-abroad narrative, he even produced several passive sentences: *"But this hole was built by skunk," "But this hole was built by owl," "But he was found by deer."* Soutaro did not produce complex sentences nor passive sentences before his one-month residence in the United States, and thus, the data suggest that the short-term residence abroad enhanced his syntactic development and helped him to improve his ability to structure the narrative.

Unlike the improvements in his story structure and syntactic complexity, Soutaro did not increase his accuracy after his short residence abroad. For example, it can be clearly seen in his post-abroad narrative that Soutaro often omitted or incorrectly used articles (e.g., *One day, in the night, the boy and frog in the room; In the morning, a boy found a frog*) and failed to employ the correct verb tense inflections in his utterances (e.g., *Then, he went to bed and sleep; However, frog run away; And the boy was finding the tree and called frog*). Additionally, he seemed to have a problem using the general verb 'find' as he frequently used it to indicate the action of 'searching,' as implied by his post-abroad utterances: *"He found everywhere and called frog," "And the boy was finding the tree and called frog,"* and *"He was climbing the rock and find it."* In fact, he used this verb

appropriately only one time when he mentioned *"But he was found by deer"* to describe the scene where the boy encounters (or is discovered by) the deer in the woods.

Such omission or erroneous choice of articles and tense morphemes as well as verb choice errors have frequently been reported as common characteristics in the oral and written production of L2 learners. For example, in their comprehensive review of morphological studies, Luk and Shirai (2009) suggest that the acquisition of English articles is particularly challenging for native speakers of Asian languages (i.e., Japanese, Chinese, and Korean) due to the absence of these items in their L1 (for more details, see section 2.2). In a similar vein, Paradis, Rice, Crago, and Marquis (2008) note that learners of English, whose L1 does not mark tense grammatically (e.g., Japanese, Korean, Mandarin, Spanish, Romanian, Cantonese, Arabic, Farsi, Dari, and Ukrainian), tend to have difficulties producing tense morphemes accurately. Abe (2019) also reports, in her study of writing produced by Japanese learners of English, that the incorrect use of tense is a frequent feature of novice learners of English. With regard to verb choice errors, Viberg (2001) and Lee (2007) state that the overextension of some general verbs (which are commonly used in our daily lives) is one of the early developmental features observed in L2 learners. In other words, L2 learners tend to overextend the verbs available in their lexicon to compensate for their lack of knowledge of particular and less-frequently used verbs.

Taken together, it can be said that Soutaro's incorrect use of articles and tense morphemes was due to the influence of his L1, Japanese, i.e., crosslinguistic influence, and that his one-month residence in the English-speaking country did not help him to overcome that influence. Moreover, the fact that he often used the verb 'find' instead of the verb 'search' in his post-abroad narrative may indicate that he overextended the verb 'find' to compensate for his lack of knowledge of the verb 'search' or that he was simply not able to retrieve the correct verb at the time of use. Again, this suggests that his short experience abroad could not help him to acquire the verb 'search' (or any verbs or expressions that have a similar meaning) or encourage him to become aware of his inappropriate use of the verb 'find.' We can also speculate that his incorrect use of these grammatical and lexical items in the post-abroad session is because he did not receive any formal instruction but was naturally immersed in English while in the United States. In such naturalistic immersion settings, four weeks may be too short for participants to be aware of and learn certain language items and rules.

Shota in Example 2 shows a similar pattern of improvements to Soutaro's narrative production in his post-abroad narrative. He also started to include more plot elements, describe the story events with a temporal link (i.e., the referential aspect of the plot), and express the causal relations between the events as well as the characters'

emotions more explicitly (i.e., the evaluative aspect of the plot) in his post-abroad narrative session.

Example 2 (Shota; H1 in Table 5.1)

Pre-abroad session (story structure score: 4pts):

This boy have a Gama and a dog. They together. Night, in the night, Gama is go out. And in the morning, boy say "what, where is Gama?" **They look in boots, look for Gama outside.** And dog. Hole, house, hole. Bee bite. Dog helps me. Boy is okay. "Where is Gama?" Boy say "where is Gama?" *Muzukashi-na*. Boy say "where is Gama?" Dog, honey, honey. There, boy is "wow!" And there are *mogura*. And *mogura* go out and boy "wow". Tree, tree, in the tree. He's near the tree. "Where is Gama?" And *wakaranai,* bird? And "how are you?" "No thank you." And he up rocks, rock. "Where is Gama?" boy say. **And there's Bob. Bob head up. Boy is up. Bob runs. Boy's fall and in the, *nante iu-n-dakke*, river *ja naku te*, in the water.** Dog helped me and boy is okay. And it calls, so climbing tree. "Where is Gama?" "Oh, I Gama." "Oh, you here, you live here?" "Yes." "Thank you." "See you, good-bye." "See you again." "Thank you."

Post-abroad session (story structure score: 8pts):

There is a boy and dog and frog. And dog and boy see frog. After they sleep, frog are out glass box. And so they lost frog. And morning, they wake up, but they don't hear the frog. And they say "oh, my gosh." **So, they look for frog in the boots and in their glass box and, um, open the window and say "Where is the frog? Come back frog!"** They look for the frog. "Come frog! Please come frog!" The boy look for the frog. This is the rat's, rat's, rat's, rat's hole? Rat's hole. And look in the rat's hole. And the dog play with bee. And boy look for the frog in the tree. **And the dog bites their hives, so bee goes to the dog. So, dog is scary.** And this is the bird. And the boy say "oops." And he sees that hole and the dog runs. **And rocks before the boy, so he up the rocks. "Where is the frog? Come frog." Then moose. There's the moose. And the moose catch the boy. The moose is mad and boy say "no, stop, stop!" But the moose runs, and dog runs, so the boy and the dog fall in the lake, small lake. They fall in the lake.** There's a tree. So, they catch the laid tree. **And**

frog's family is there, and his small frog is there. And when they look for the frog, there's the frog. So, they take his frog, this frog and go home.

A closer look at his post-abroad narrative revealed that, like Soutaro, Shota also effectively used different types of connectors to link or combine clauses and articulate the temporal relations between the events of the story or the characters' actions. For example, the utterances such as *"After they sleep, frog are out glass box. And so they lost frog. And morning, they wake up, but they don't hear the frog"* appeared in his post-abroad narrative, illustrating how he effectively used a sequence connector *"after,"* an additive connector *"and,"* and a contrastive connector *"but"* to describe the temporally related events that emerged in the first few scenes of the story (note that, in his pre-abroad narrative, Shota only mentioned *"Night, in the night, Gama is go out. And in the morning, boy say "what, where is Gama?"* when narrating the same scene). Additionally, in his post-abroad narrative, Shota started to use a subordinator *"when"* to articulate the outcome of the character's behavior (i.e., the boy's action of searching for his frog) such as *"And when they look for the frog, there's the frog."*

Perhaps, the most striking difference to emerge between Shota's pre- and post-abroad narratives is his use of evaluative devices. If we look at his post-abroad narrative, we find that he employed different evaluative devices to convey the causal relations between the events of the story and the characters' feelings or intentions. For instance, as was the case with Soutaro, Shota often used a causal connector (or a subordinating

conjunction) *"so"* in his narrative to describe the inferred reasons for the characters' behaviors, such as *"And the dog bites their hives, so bee goes to the dog," "And rocks before the boy, so he up the rocks,"* and *"But the moose runs and dog runs, so the boy and the dog fall in the lake, small lake."* He also started to use 'emotion terms' (such as *"scary"* and *"mad"*) in his narration to express the character's emotions explicitly: *And the dog bites their hives, so bee goes to the dog. So, dog is scary.* and *And the moose catch the boy. The moose is mad and boy say "no, stop, stop!" But the moose runs, and dog runs, so the boy and the dog fall in the lake, small lake.* As frequently reported, such emotion terms are used for two different functions, either to describe a character's feeling as a reaction to the outcome of a certain event, or to describe a character's feeling as a motivation to act. Both of these have been considered important elements of narratives as they help a narrator to organize the sequence of actions into a coherent story (Bohnacker, 2016; Nakamura, 2009; Reilly et al., 2004). In Shota's case, we can also see that he used the emotion term *"scary"* to express the dog's feeling as a reaction to the bees chasing after him and that he used *"mad"* to describe the moose's feeling, which motivates him to throw the boy off a cliff. Indeed, as was suggested in previous studies, such emotion terms appeared to be helpful for Shota to produce the coherent story as they gave meaning to the story events or the characters' behaviors.

In Shota's pre-abroad narrative, we rarely see him use these evaluative devices. As a matter of fact, he used a causal connector *"so"* only one time (e.g., *And it calls, so climbing tree*) and did not produce any emotion terms in his narrative. Instead, in his pre-abroad session, he relied heavily on 'character speech,' which is one of the evaluative devices that allows a narrator to express a character's feelings in a relatively simple manner (Nakamura, 2009). For example, when describing the scene of the boy finding his runaway frog, he produced the conversation between the boy and the frog such as: *And it calls, so climbing tree. "Where is Gama?" "Oh, I Gama." "Oh, you here, you live here?" "Yes."* In contrast, in his post-abroad narrative, he did not include such direct character speech but described the same scene as follows: *There's a tree. So, they catch the laid tree. And frog's family is there. And when they look for the frog, there's the frog.* According to Nakamura (2009), the use of character speech decreases with age. In her study of Japanese speakers' use of evaluative expressions in their *Frog, Where are You?* narratives, she found that younger children produced direct speech frequently for the story characters while older children and adults used character speech less frequently but employed different evaluative devices (including causal connectors, mental state verbs, emotion terms, and others) to make their narratives more complex and coherent. Balaban and Hohenberger (2020) also report that, compared to younger children, older children are less likely to use character speech in their narratives because they are more cognitively and

linguistically developed and thus can use various types of evaluative devices to provide more detailed information about the events, characters, and internal states of the characters. Although the focus of these studies is children's narrative development in the L1, their findings may also apply to the present case. The results where Shota became able to use different evaluative devices and, at the same time, decrease the use of direct character speech in his post-abroad session may indicate the development of his narrative (or evaluative) ability in English after his one-month experience abroad.

Linguistically, Shota's narrative data also show the benefits of the short-term residence abroad for increasing lexical and syntactic complexity. For instance, during his pre-abroad session, Shota often struggled to retrieve some English vocabulary as can be inferred from his Japanese comments such as "*Muzukashi-na* [this is difficult]," "*wakaranai* [I don't know]," "*nante iu-n-dakke* [how do I say?]," "*ja nakute* [this is not right]." Moreover, he even inserted the Japanese word "*mogura* [a mole]" to fill in his lexical gap in his pre-abroad narration (e.g., *And there are mogura. And mogura go out and boy "wow"*). After four weeks in Canada, however, he did not show any difficulties producing English words and composing sentences or clauses completely in English. With regard to his syntactic skills, as was the case with Soutaro, Shota also started to compose complex sentences using subordinators (e.g., *But the moose runs and dog runs, so the boy and the dog fall in the lake, small lake,* and *And when they look for the frog, there's the*

frog) after his short residence abroad. In the pre-abroad session, he produced only simple sentences or phrases, and thus, the data show that the one-month residence abroad enhanced his syntactic development.

Finally, unlike for lexical and syntactic knowledge, not much change could be found in Shota's lexical and morphosyntactic accuracy after his short experience abroad, as can be seen in his pre- and post-abroad narratives. In both sessions, as was the case with Soutaro, Shota frequently made errors in the use of articles and verb tense inflections. For example, in his pre-abroad session, he often omitted the articles (e.g., *Dog helps me; Boy is okay; Boy say "where is Gama?"*) and did not put the verbs into the correct tense (e.g., *And in the morning, boy say "what, where is Gama?"; This boy have a Gama and a dog*) in his utterances. This pattern remained the same after his short residence abroad (e.g., *There is a boy and dog and frog; After they sleep, frog are out glass box*), indicating that the short-term residence in the English-speaking country did not help him much to increase accuracy.

In sum, the narrative data of Soutaro and Shota show the clear benefits of the short-term residence abroad for increasing *story structure, lexical, and syntactic complexity*, but not for *lexical and morphosyntactic accuracy*. The closer investigation of their narratives reveals that even one month of naturalistic language immersion can encourage the development of the ability to produce a coherent story using a variety of

vocabulary and complex sentences at the macro level. It appears, however, that the participants were not able to improve their lexical and morphosyntactic accuracy at the microlevel. Four weeks of naturalistic language immersion was not sufficient for them to acquire certain morphosyntactic items that do not exist in their L1, Japanese, or to learn vocabulary not frequently used in daily life.

So far, we have closely looked at the narratives produced by the two representative participants in the High group and how their narratives improved after their summer abroad. In the following, some examples, which are extracted from the narratives of other participants in the High group, are given to provide an idea of how their narrative abilities developed in a similar manner as Soutaro and Shota (the number in parentheses indicates the participant's story structure score). Example 3 shows how the participants became able to describe the sequence of events or the characters' behaviors in a temporal order smoothly by using different types of connectors (i.e., sequence, additive, contrastive connectors), while Example 4 presents how they became able to express the causal relations between the events of the story by using subordinators effectively in the post-abroad session. With respect to the utterances in Example 4, we can also see that the participants – including H9, H13, and H14 who maintained or decreased their story structure score in the post-abroad session – were able to compose complex sentences using subordinating conjunctions after being abroad.

Example 3 Increased use of different connectors in the post-abroad narratives

H3 Pre (5pts): *They, they, found a tree near the river. They, they look for Jack. Jack is here, is there.*

Post (8pts): *Then, they found tree. And they looked, um, they looked this tree. After that, they found the frog.* [note: Jack refers to the frog]

H5 Pre (6pts): *John and Mike went looking for the frog outside. John and Mike are call the frog.* [note: Mike refers to the boy; John refers to the dog]

Post (8pts): *Mike and James are looking for Hunter outside and calls Hunter, but can't find.* [note: Mike is the boy; James is the dog; Hunter is the frog]

H8 Pre (8pts): *The dog is looking for a frog in the cup. The cup is sink in his, his head.*

Post (8pts): *The dog got his head in the pot, but he couldn't get off his head from the pot.*

Example 4 Increased use of subordinating conjunctions in the post-abroad narratives

H6 Pre (6pts): – [note: The participant did not describe the scene]

Post (8pts): *When Tom said that in the wood, John dropped beehive in the ground, so, the bee came, came to John.* [note: Tom refers to the boy; John refers to the dog]

H7 Pre (7pts): *Boy and dog are happy. Frog's family, too.*

Post (8pts): *Boy and dog is happy because boy, his frog has seven frogs, um, seven children, child frogs.*

H9 Pre (8pts): – [note: The participant did not describe the scene]

Post (8pts): *And the dog, the dog run away because the bee was angry.*

H13 Pre (7pts): *After the, after Tom found hole, Wilson, something comes to Wilson.*

Post (7pts): *And Tora ran because, because bee, because bee came to him.*

H14 Pre (8pts): *Tom look, looks in the bin. Frog, the frog isn't in the bin.*

Post (7pts): *Next morning, the boy looked at the bottle. The frog isn't here, so, the boy is sad.*

In Example 5 below, we can see that H2, H6, H9, and H14 started to describe the characters' emotions using the emotion terms such as *"(having) fun," "(was) surprised," "(was) angry,"* and "*(is) sad*." None of these participants produced such evaluative expressions in their narratives before the one-month residence abroad (as can be seen in their pre-abroad utterances), indicating the improvement in their evaluative abilities in English after their summer abroad.

Example 5 Increased use of other evaluative expressions in the post-abroad narratives

H2 Pre (5pts): *This dog etto* [um], *this dog is 'hachi' 'hachi' dakara* [it's 'bee,' 'bee,' so].

Post (8pts): *My dog playing with bee. And my dog, my dog having fun.*

H6 Pre (6pts): *"Frog, frog, are you in here?" Bob said. But it isn't. The mouse, the mouse lives there. "The frog, are you in here?" Bob said in the tree.* [note: Bob refers to the boy]

Post (8pts): *"Frog, are you here?" Tom said to the cave. Then, the mouse out, came out from the cave. Then, Tom was surprised.* [note: Tom refers to the boy]

H9 Pre (8pts): – [note: The participant did not describe the scene]

Post (8pts): *And the dog, the dog run away because the bee was angry.*

H14 Pre (8pts): *Tom look, looks in the bin. Frog, the frog isn't in the bin.*

Post (7pts): *Next morning, the boy looked at the bottle. The frog isn't here, so, the boy is sad.*

As shown in Example 6, some participants in the High group frequently produced Japanese fillers *"etto* [um]" or utterances such as *"nante-iu-n-darou* [how do I say?]" and

"wakan-nai [I don't know]" when they had difficulties retrieving English words in the pre-abroad session. In Example 6, H2 and H11 even used a Japanese onomatopoeic expression (e.g., *'pyuu'* instead of 'going outside') or vocabulary (e.g., *'su'* instead of 'hive') to compensate for their lack of knowledge of some English words in their pre-abroad narratives. As was the case with Shota, however, none of them produced such Japanese utterances nor inserted Japanese words in their narrations after their four-week residence in the United States or Canada when they became able to compose the story entirely in English.

Example 6 Increased use of English vocabulary in the post-abroad narratives

H2 Pre (5pts): *But frog is night nante iu-n-darou* [how do I say]? *Frog is pyuu.* ['*pyuu'* is a Japanese onomatopoeic expression, indicating someone (in this case, a frog) is running away or going outside in hurry]
This dog etto [um], *this dog is 'hachi' 'hachi' dakara* [it's 'bee,' 'bee,' so].

Post (8pts): *But this frog go outside.*
My dog playing with bee. And my dog, my dog having fun.

H4 Pre (5pts): *They slept. After etto* [um] *that, Jack a dou shiyou, nante iu-n-darou, 'nigeru'* [um, I don't know, how do I say 'run away' in English?]. [note: Jack refers to the frog]

Post (8pts): *One day, they slept. Frog went out of the bottle and ran away from this house.*

H12 Pre (5pts): *Etto 'shika' wakan-nai. 'Shika' tte nante iu-n-darou* [Um, 'deer.' I don't know how to say 'deer' in English]. *This animal ride. This animal one. Boy and dog down 'shika' tte*

nante iu-n-darou? [I don't know how to say 'deer' in English].

Post (7pts): *He's on deer. Deer ride and hit the pond.*

H11 Pre (4pts): *And the dog is bee's 'su,' 'su'* ['hive,' 'hive']

Post (7pts): *And the beehive? And dog push tree, and beehive down.*

Lastly, if we look at each post-abroad utterance presented in Examples 3 to 6, we find in general that, like Soutaro and Shota, they had some trouble using articles and putting the verbs into the correct tense forms even after one month in the English-speaking country. For instance, H2 in Examples 5 and 6 frequently made morphosyntactic errors, as can be seen from her utterances: *But this frog go outside; My dog playing with bee. And my dog, my dog having fun.* Likewise, H7 and H9 in Example 4 often omitted the articles and used the incorrect verb forms in their post-abroad narratives such as *Boy and dog is happy because boy, his frog has seven frogs* (H7) and *And the dog, the dog run away because the bee was angry* (H9). Such errors can be found in other participants' post-abroad narratives, and thus, the data show that short-term residence abroad does not enhance one's lexical and morphosyntactic accuracy in the target language.

Overall, while not much change could be found in terms of lexical and morphosyntactic accuracy, the results described above are encouraging that short-term residence abroad can help participants to increase their narrative skills both at the story structure and linguistic constructions levels. The data obtained from the participants in the High group show that they became able to produce a more complex yet coherent story,

using various types of connectors and evaluative devices in the post-abroad session. At the same time (as indicated also in the results of the quantitative analyses [see section 5.2]), they started to use some English vocabulary which they could not use in their pre-abroad session, as well as to compose complex sentences after their month abroad.

6.2 Narrative development in the Middle-group participants

To provide an idea of how the narratives of the participants in the Middle group (M15–M28 in Table 5.1 in section 5.1) improved after one-month abroad and how they are different or similar to those of the participants in the High group, two complete sets of narrative data selected from the Middle-group participants are presented below. Example 7 was produced by Akiko (M15) whose story structure score increased in the post-abroad session to 6 from 2, while Example 8 shows the narratives by Kazu (M20) who increased his story structure score to 5 from 2 after being abroad.

Examples 7 and 8 clearly show that, as was the case with Soutaro and Shota (in Examples 1 and 2), both Akiko and Kazu started to produce a longer narrative after their short residence abroad. In particular, they made great attempts to express the scenes of the boy searching for his missing pet frog in the forest (i.e., the ‘adventures outside’ element), which they could not describe explicitly in their pre-abroad session, after they spent one month in the United States or Canada.

When we look closer at Akiko's narratives in Example 7, there is further evidence that her short residence in the United States has helped her to improve her narrative ability, particularly in terms of expressing the referential aspect of the story in English. For example, in her pre-abroad narrative, Akiko produced direct speech for the boy throughout the 'adventures outside' scene (mainly, one-word quotes for each picture) and could not recount the characters' behaviors, as seen here: *"Frog?"* (the boy looks into a hole in the ground), *"Ouch!"* (a mole comes out of the hole, and the boy gets attacked by the mole), *"Frog?"* (the boy looks into a hole in the tree, while the dog jumps at the beehive), *"Oh, no!"* (the boy falls off from the tree, while the dog gets chased by the bees). After four weeks in the United States, however, she began to describe the characters' actions indirectly from the narrator's perspective, using a wider variety of vocabulary, when depicting the same scenes as follows: *"Hey, frog?" He look hole. But this hole is rat's house. "Hey, frog?" Dog breaks the bee's house. Dog is run fast. And bee runs after the dog.* Additionally, in her post-abroad narrative, Akiko used some connectors effectively to link clauses and describe the events in a temporal order (e.g., *He look hole. <u>But</u> this hole is rat's house […] Dog is run fast. <u>And</u> bee runs after the dog*), whereas, in the pre-abroad session, she did not use any connectors to convey the relationship between the clauses or the events of the story in her narrative.

Example 7 (Akiko; M15 in Table 5.1)

Pre-abroad session (story structure score: 2pts):

One day, he get the frog. This night, frog go there. "Oh, no. What did you do, frog? Don't break the pot! Frog? Frog? Ouch! Frog? Oh, no! Ouch! Frog? No. Oh, listen, shhh. Frog? Frog?" The frog's parents. My frog. "Good-bye, frog's parents."

Post-abroad session (story structure score: 6pts):

One day, the boy caught a frog. Next morning, frog get out his house. **He look his frog under the bed.** And his house is, um. "Hey, this dog is falling down and broke the glass! Do not break! Hey, frog? Hey, frog?" **He look hole. But this hole is rat's house.** "Hey, frog?" **Dog break the bee's house. Dog is run fast. And bee runs after the dog.** "Hey, frog? Ouch." The boy falling down. "Hey, listen." **The boy, the boy, um, look frog's parents and his frog.** "Good-bye, parents."

A similar pattern of improvement as in Akiko's narrative production can be seen in Kazu's post-abroad narrative in Example 8. He also started to provide more elaborated descriptions of the characters and the events, i.e., referential components of the story, through producing more sentences in his post-abroad narrative session. For instance, in his pre-abroad narrative, Kazu could not articulate the 'orientation' (i.e., the boy stays with his pet frog) and the 'onset' elements (i.e., the frog escapes from his jar while the boy is asleep) as he produced only short verb phrases (VP) or noun phrases (NP) when depicting the first few scenes of the story, such as *Caught frog. Frog my friend together. Sleeping. Get up. No, no frog.* After his trip to Canada, however, he became able to express these story elements more explicitly from the narrator's point of view, composing full sentences that consist of a subject (NP) and a predicate (VP) such as: *Tonight, he's got a frog. But he get, got, um, his frog escaped tonight. This morning, "where, where, where's my frog?" he*

screamed. Moreover, as was the case with Akiko, in his post-abroad narrative, Kazu began to use both sequence and contrastive connectors, which enabled him to recount the characters' actions and the outcomes of these actions clearly, such as *He looked at a hole. And then, mouse, little mouse his nose attack; He is touching tree. But that is a horn, an animal's horn; They fall in the lake, lake, yeah, and then hear little sounds.*

Example 8 (Kazu; M20 in Table 5.1)

Pre-abroad session (story structure score: 2pts):

Caught frog. Frog my friend together. Sleeping. Get up. No, no frog. Fall dog. Break glass. I'm "wow!" It's bee. It's mouse. Attack me. "No!" I'm fall. My friend together fall. It's a lake. **I see frog and family.** "Good-bye." I'm caught frog. One frog. "Good-bye."

Post-abroad session (story structure score: 5pts):

Tonight, he's got a frog. But he get, got, um, his frog escaped tonight. This morning, "where, where, where's my frog?" he screamed. And dog is breaking the glass. "Where, where, where's my frog" he said. A hole. **He looked at a hole. And then, mouse, little mouse his nose attack. Then, the dog attack bee's house. "Where, where, where's my frog" he screamed. Then the bee attack dog. He is touching tree. But that is a horn, an animal's horn.** He catch him. **They fall in lake, lake, yeah, and then hear little sounds. He get a frog.** "Good-bye, frog's family" he said.

Viberg (2001, p. 97) notes, "[O]ne important aspect of the linguistic realization of a narrative is clause combining […] and the mastery of the formal devices serving to link or combine clauses and their various functions." The results where both Akiko and Kazu composed more clauses to describe the events of the story (or the characters' behaviors) and used connectors to link these clauses in their post-abroad narratives may indicate that their one-month residence in the English-speaking country has enhanced their narrative (or

referential) ability development in English. Linguistically, the results presented here also suggest the benefit of the short-term residence abroad for increasing lexical and syntactic knowledge. Both Akiko and Kazu used a greater variety of vocabulary and composed full sentences more frequently post-abroad than pre-abroad when short NPs or VPs were produced throughout their narratives.

Unlike the improvements in the participants' referential ability, not much difference could be found in their evaluative ability after the short-term residence abroad, as can be seen in their pre- and post-abroad narratives. In both sessions, Akiko and Kazu often produced 'character speech' but did not use other evaluative devices (such as mental state verbs, emotion terms, causal connectors, and others) in their narratives. This suggests that they were less likely to infer and convey aspects of the story which are not directly evident within the pictures (e.g., the character's internal state, emotions, and the cause and effect of the character's behavior) in English, and such a tendency did not change much even after their month abroad. This may also be an indication of their limited English proficiency. With regard to this point, (as mentioned earlier) Nakamura (2009, 2019) and Balaban and Hohenberger (2020) have emphasized that narrators' use of evaluative expressions differs depending on their age or proficiency levels; they described how younger children or speakers with lower proficiency tend to rely on character speech, which allows them to express the character's feelings in a simple manner, whereas older

children or speakers with higher proficiency tend to use various evaluative devices to express the significance of events and characters' inner thoughts. While both Akiko and Kazu indeed increased their lexical and syntactic knowledge during their summer abroad (as discussed above), they did not seem to be able to fully acquire the vocabulary that encodes cognitive states (i.e., mental state verbs) or convey emotions (i.e., emotion terms), as well as the syntactic items that refer to causal frameworks for the relationships between the sequenced events (i.e., causal connectors or subordinators). This might lead them to use character speech frequently in their construction of a narrative even after their one-month stay in the English-speaking country.

Lastly, as was the case with the participants in the High group, Akiko and Kazu did not seem to increase their (morpho) syntactic accuracy after their short-term RA. Again, the participants often made errors in using articles and verb tense inflections in their pre- and post-abroad narratives. For example, in the pre-abroad session, both Akiko and Kazu omitted or incorrectly used articles as can be found in their utterances, *One day, he get the frog. This night, frog go there* (Akiko); *It's bee. It's mouse* (Kazu). They also failed to put the verbs into the appropriate tense such as *One day, he get the frog. This night, frog go there* (Akiko); *I'm fall. I'm caught frog* (Kazu). This pattern remained consistent after their month abroad (e.g., *He look hole. But this hole is rat's house* [Akiko]; *And dog is breaking the glass. Then, the dog attack bee's house. He catch him* [Kazu]). In addition,

we can see them make other types of errors in their post-abroad narratives, such as dropping the object (e.g., *Do not break!* [Akiko]) and putting the words in the incorrect order (e.g., *And then, mouse, little mouse his nose attack* [Kazu]), both of which were also caused by interference from their L1, Japanese. Specifically, Akiko dropped the object in her utterance *"Do not break!"* possibly because such an object deletion is extensively allowed in Japanese, and she transferred her L1 knowledge into English which, unlike Japanese, does not allow object omissions. Likewise, in Kazu's case, we can see the effects of the Japanese word order (i.e., subject–object–verb order) in his utterance *"little mouse his nose attack."* Nevertheless, the results here show that one-month RA does not have any effect in increasing (morpho)syntactic accuracy.

In short, the narrative data obtained from Akiko and Kazu show that the short-term period spent abroad is beneficial in general for enhancing one's narrative development. Both participants became able to provide more detailed descriptions of the plot elements, using a wider variety of vocabulary and composing full sentences more frequently in their post-abroad narratives than in their pre-abroad ones. They also started to use different connectors (i.e., additive, sequence, and contrastive connectors) effectively to link or combine clauses and express how the events of the story or the characters' actions are temporally related in their narratives after their month abroad. As the results revealed, however, neither participant became better at conveying aspects of the story which are not

overtly available from the pictures. That is, unlike the High-group participants, they did not show signs of being able to use more evaluative devices, which describe the characters' emotions or mental states as well as the causal relations between the events or the characters' behavior, in their post-abroad narratives. With respect to this point, it can be said that the one-month of naturalistic language immersion was not sufficient for them to learn the evaluative language in English. Moreover, as was the case with the High-group participants, both Akiko and Kazu often made (morpho)syntactic errors caused by crosslinguistic transfer from their L1, Japanese, again indicating the difficulty of acquiring certain grammatical items that are absent in (or different from) one's L1 during such a short experience abroad.

Thus far, we have closely investigated the narratives produced by Akiko and Kazu and discussed how their short-term residence abroad has helped them to improve their narrative ability in English. Below in Examples 9 and 10, some utterances, which are elicited from the narratives of other participants in the Middle group, are summarized to give an idea of how they followed a similar pattern of narrative development as Akiko and Kazu.

In Example 9, we can see that the participants became able to recount the story more elaborately, composing full sentences in their post-abroad narratives. While the Middle-group participants often produced short NPs or VPs when describing each plot

element in the pre-abroad session, they began to use different vocabulary and make full sentences throughout their narratives after their short-term experience abroad.

Example 9 Increased production of full sentences in the post-abroad narratives

M21	Pre	(4pts):	*Frog, there boy and dog and frog.*
	Post	(5pts):	*Once upon a time, there was a one boy and dog and a frog.*
M25	Pre	(2pts):	*Wood's hole. Wood's hole inside owl.*
	Post	(4pts):	*And Tim look tree's hole. Inside that, there isn't frog.* [note: Tim refers to the boy]
M26	Pre	(3pts):	*This frog, this frog in jar. Now, run.*
	Post	(4pts):	*But this frog run, but, um, but this frog run from this jar.*
M27	Pre	(3pts):	*And morning, get up, get up at morning. No Green.*
	Post	(4pts):	*Morning, when Tom gets up, Green is not home.* [note: Tom refers to the boy, and Green refers to the frog]

Example 10 shows that many Middle-group participants became able to use additive (e.g., *and*), sequence (e.g., *then, and then, lastly*), and contrastive (e.g., *but*) connectors to combine or link clauses and clearly describe temporal relations between the events or the characters' behaviors after being abroad. We can also see that M18 started to use a relative pronoun, which enabled him to add information about the noun (in this case, *many animals*) and compose a complex sentence in his post-abroad narrative: *He met many animals, many animals <u>which</u> were so angry: beetle and owl and deer.* Moreover, M27 began to use the subordinating conjunction *"when"* to smoothly connect the temporally sequenced events in her post-abroad narrative, *Morning, <u>when</u> Tom gets up, Green is not home.* In the pre-abroad sessions, these participants did not use such connectors, indicating

that their referential ability – the ability to provide information about the characters or events of the story – in English improved after their short residence in the United States or Canada.

Example 10 Increased use of different connectors in the post-abroad narratives

M17 Pre (4pts): *The boy go to the forest.*

Post (6pts): *The boy go to the forest, but the dog want to see bee's house. But the boy didn't see that.*

M18 Pre (5pts): *He met, he met owl. But he found, he found, he found frog. He found his frog.*

Post (6pts): *He met many animals, many animals which were so angry: beetle and owl and deer. But lastly, he heard the frog's noise. He searched the frog, frog's voice. And then, he found the frog.*

M19 Pre (5pts): *Next morning, boy and dog wake up, no frog.*

Post (6pts): *Tomorrow morning, boy and dog get up and then look Hiro. But "wow! Hiro not in the bottle!"* [note: Hiro refers to the frog]

M23 Pre (5pts): *He is falling to the pond. He is hearing frog's voice, the voice. There are frogs.*

Post (5pts): *The boy and the dog fell down the pond. Then he heard frog's voice and found frogs.*

M24 Pre (1pts): *This dog fall!*

Post (4pts): *Then, um, this dog falls, falls the, falls the window and broke off this jar.*

M27 Pre (3pts): *And morning, get up, get up at morning. Green lost.*

Post (4pts): *Morning, when Tom gets up, Green is not home.* [note: Tom refers to the boy, and Green refers to the frog]

When we look at Examples 9 and 10, we find that the participants made greater attempts to depict the pictures but rarely conveyed the characters' affective states and provided meanings to the story events in their narratives after being abroad. As a matter of fact, only M17 and M18 started to use evaluative devices other than character speech in their post-abroad narratives as can be seen in Example 10; M17 used a mental state verb *"want (to)"* to express the dog's internal desire to see the beehive, such as *The boy go to the forest, but the dog want to see bee's house*; M18 employed an emotion term *"angry"* to convey emotions of the animals that the boy encounters in the forest, *He met many animals, many animals which were so angry: beetle and owl and deer.* Other participants (including Akiko and Kazu) did not use such evaluative expressions nor causal connectors in their pre- and post-abroad narratives, and therefore, their data show that the short-term experience abroad does not necessarily guarantee improvement in one's evaluative abilities in the target language.

Finally, as with the participants in the High group, the Middle-group participants also consistently made errors, particularly in the use of articles and verb tense inflections even after their one-month residence in the English-speaking country as can be seen in Examples 9 and 10. For example, M18 and M19 in Example 10 often omitted the necessary articles in their post-abroad utterances such as: *He met many animals, many animals which were so angry: beetle and owl and deer* (M18) and *Tomorrow morning, boy*

and dog get up and then look Hiro (M19). Similarly, M25 in Example 9 and M17 in Example 10 omitted the articles and failed to use the correct verb forms in their post-abroad utterances: *And Tim looks tree's hole. Inside that, there isn't frog* (M25) and *The boy go to the forest, but the dog want to see bee's house* (M17). Again, these examples collectively illustrate that one cannot acquire certain morphosyntactic items that are unique in the target language just by being naturally immersed in the language for a month.

All in all, the results presented above demonstrate that four weeks of naturalistic language immersion can enhance participants' lexical and syntactic development in the target language. The narrative data obtained from the Middle-group participants show that, using a greater variety of vocabulary, they became able to compose full (or simple) sentences much more in their post-abroad narratives than in their pre-abroad ones. Moreover, a few participants even became able to produce complex sentences using subordinating conjunctions. With regard to the story structure, owing to their lexical and syntactic improvement, the participants started to provide elaborated descriptions of the characters and the story events in their post-abroad narratives. Unlike the participants in the High group, however, the Middle-group participants rarely included evaluative expressions (other than character speech) in their narratives even after their short residence abroad. This suggests that one cannot necessarily acquire evaluative language simply by being immersed in the target language for one month. Moreover, they did not seem to

increase their (morpho)syntactic accuracy after their short stay in the United States or Canada, indicating again the difficulty of acquiring or learning certain grammatical items in the short-term naturalistic language immersion context.

6.3 Narrative development in the Low-group participants

The following two complete sets of narrative data illustrate representative patterns of narrative development in the Low-group participants (L29–L55 in Table 5.1 in section 5.1) after their short-term residence in the English-speaking country. Example 11 shows the narratives by Hiro (L31) who improved his story structure score in the post-abroad session from 1 to 3, whereas Example 12 was produced by Yumi (L41) whose story structure score increased slightly from 1 to 2 after being abroad.

When looking at Example 11, it is clear that, like the participants in the other two groups, Hiro became able to produce a longer narrative in the post-abroad session than in the pre-abroad one. Before his short trip to the United States, Hiro struggled to tell the story in English, as implied by his Japanese comments such as "*Nante ieba ii-n-darou?* [how do I say?]," "*Muzukashii* [this is difficult]," and "*E, um, wakan-nai* [Oh, I don't understand]." He eventually made only three short utterances in English and did not complete the task in the pre-abroad session. After a month abroad, however, he was able to produce twenty-seven English utterances, use more vocabulary, and tell the story to its end.

Example 11 (Hiro; L31 in Table 5.1)

Pre-abroad session (story structure score: 1pt):

My frog. I'm, um, sleep. *Nante ieba ii-n-darou? Muzukashii.* Morning, I get up and not frog. *E*, um, *wakan-nai-na. Muzukashii. E*, um, *wakan-nai, wakaranai. Muzukashii desu.*

Post-abroad session (story structure score: 3pts):

I, dog, and frog. I go to sleep. Next morning, I woke up. But frog, not frog in the bottle. "Frog, where are you? Frog, where are you going? No. Frog?" But he's no come back. Frog is, um. Dog is breaking the bottle. "Frog, where are you going? Do you know my frog?" Mouse, "oh, I don't know." "Frog, where are you? Frog, where are you going?" Frog is not at. **I am, I am on deer. And deer go out. And I got down river. I'm in river.** Frog said "croak, croak." I listen. I look, um, **I look frog. Frog has children. And I get one frog**. "Good-bye, frog."

If we then take a closer look at Hiro's post-abroad narrative data, we find that he became able to establish the *global* 'search' theme of the story in his narrative. Although he did not or could not provide explicit descriptions of the *local* plot elements (as reflected in his low story structure score), he was able to express the boy's search attempt and its outcome, using character speech effectively in his narrative. For example, Hiro often produced direct speech for the boy (such as *"Frog, where are you?" "Frog, where are you going?"* and *"Do you know my frog?"*) to convey the boy's search attempts or his intentions of searching for his missing pet frog. The outcomes of the boy's search attempts were then expressed directly through the narration (e.g., *But he's no come back; Frog is not at; I look, um, I look frog. Frog has children. And I get one frog*) or indirectly through the character's speech (e.g., *"Do you know my frog?" Mouse, "oh, I don't know"*).

Furthermore, we can see in his post-abroad narrative that Hiro began to use connectors (though limited to additive and contrastive connectors) to link the utterances smoothly and describe the temporal relations between the sequenced events or the characters' actions as seen here: *Next morning, I woke up. <u>But</u> frog, not frog in the bottle; "Frog?" <u>But</u> he's no come back; I am, I am on deer. <u>And</u> deer go out. <u>And</u> I got down river; Frog has children. <u>And</u> I get one frog.*

Yumi in Example 12 demonstrates a similar pattern of development to Hiro's narrative production in her post-abroad narrative. She also started to convey the overarching theme of the story through using direct speech for different characters in her narrative after the short-term residence in the United States. More specifically, in the post-abroad session, Yumi established a dialogue between the boy and other characters (such as the dog, the mouse, the owl, and the deer) almost throughout her narrative to express the boy's search attempts to find his runaway frog and their outcomes as follows: (the boy asks his dog) *"Do you know frog?"* (the dog answers) *"No."* (the boy says) *"Where are you frog? Frog, frog, frog, are you in the hole?"* (the mouse answers) *"This is my house."* (the boy asks) *"Frog, are you in the tree?"* (the owl answers) *"No, this is my home."* (the boy apologizes to the owl and then continues looking for his frog) *"I'm sorry. Frog, frog!"* (the dog tells the boy) *"Be careful."* (the deer appears and says to the boy) *"Don't touch me!"*

Example 12 (Yumi; L41 in Table 5.1)

Pre-abroad session (story structure score: 1pt):

Once upon a time, a boy and frog and dog in this house. One day, in the, *etto*. "Where is frog? Frog? Frog? Frog? Frog? No. Frog? Frog? Oh, ouch. Frog? Frog? Oh, no! Shh. Oh, frog! Your family? Bye."

Post-abroad session (story structure score: 2pts):

Once upon a time, there is a boy, dog, and frog in the house. "Good night, frog. Good night dog. I go to the bed. Oh, no! Frog is gone! Frog, where is a frog? Do you know frog?" "No." "Where are you, frog? Frog, frog, frog, are you in the hole?" "This is my house." "Frog, are you in the tree?" "No, this is my home." "I'm sorry. Frog, frog!" "Be careful." "Don't touch me!" "Oh, no! Shhh, be quiet." "I got it." "Oh, this is your girlfriend? This is your child? Good-bye, frogs."

In her pre-abroad narrative, Yumi failed to articulate the story's 'search' theme as she did not give any details of the story events but launched into the boy's monologue, which consists of a series of short utterances (e.g., *"Where is frog? Frog?* […] *Frog? Oh, ouch. Frog? Frog? Oh, no! Shh. Oh, frog! Your family? Bye"*). Thus, the data shows that the short-term residence in the United States has helped her to improve her vocabulary and storytelling ability in English.

While Hiro and Yumi indeed became better at telling the story in English after their short residence in the United States, they still could not *elaborate* by providing more details of each plot element (i.e., referential aspect of the story) and by expressing relations between the events or the characters' emotions (i.e., evaluative aspect of the story) in their narrations. Perhaps the participants' heavy reliance on character speech led them to recount the story without giving detailed descriptions of the characters or the events that are

closely intertwined with temporality and causality. At the linguistic level, these results may also indicate that while both participants clearly increased their lexical knowledge during their month abroad, they could not fully acquire the vocabulary that encodes information about the characters (including emotion terms and mental state verbs) and the syntactic items that allow the narrator to articulate causal relations between the clauses or the events of the story (i.e., connectors or conjunctions). Finally, like the participants in the High and Middle groups, Hiro and Yumi also showed some problems using articles (e.g., *I am, I am on deer. And deer go out* [Hiro]; *Once upon a time, there is a boy, dog, and frog in the house.* […] *I go to the bed* [Yumi]) and putting the verbs into the appropriate tense (e.g., *But he's no come back.* […] *And deer go out* [Hiro]; *Once upon a time, there is a boy, dog, and frog in the house* [Yumi]) in their post-abroad narrative session. This suggests once more the difficulty of acquiring the morphosyntactic items or rules that do not exist in one's L1 in the short-term naturalistic language immersion context.

So far, we have closely examined the narrative data of the two representative participants in the Low group and how their narratives were enhanced after their one-month residence in the United States. In the following, some examples elicited from the narratives of other participants in the Low group are summarized to give an idea of how their narrative abilities improved in a similar manner as Hiro and Yumi. Example 13 presents how the participants, including L47, L53, and L55 whose story structure score

stayed the same after their short RA, became able to provide slightly more descriptions of each scene by using more vocabulary and direct speech for different characters in their narratives.

Example 13 Increased use of English vocabulary and character speech in the post-abroad session

L34	Pre	(2pts):	*"Tan, where?" Ken and Aya lake in.* [note: Ken refers to the boy, while Aya refers to the dog]
	Post	(3pts):	*"Where is a frog?" I ride an animal. And an animal says "stop." I and dog drop in the lake.*
L39	Pre	(0pt):	*My friend. Afternoon, me in bed. Morning, my friend no.*
	Post	(2pts):	*Tonight, I see this frog. Frog is my pet. "I'm going to bed and sleep, bye." "Good night." Next morning, "Oh, no! Frog is go out!"*
L40	Pre	(0pt):	– [note: The participant did not describe the scene]
	Post	(2pts):	*"Be quiet, please." "Okay." It's frog and wife and kids. I one frog take home. "Good-bye, frogs."*
L47	Pre	(2pts)	*Boy, um, <u>mita</u> [look at] dog. Boy, um, called Hiroshi.* [note: Hiroshi refers to the frog]
	Post	(2pts)	*"No!" Dog down the, down window. Boy is very angry at his dog.*
L53	Pre	(1pt):	*"Mr. <u>Kaeru</u>* [frog]*, where? Ouch! Where?"*
	Post	(1pt):	*"Where is a frog? Dog, be careful the bumble bee. Be careful." "Okay." "Oh, Ouch! Where's a frog?"*
L55	Pre	(1pt):	*Small voice. "Let's go! Oh, frog! See you, bye."*
	Post	(1pt):	*"What? Be quiet, dog. Shhh. Listen." "Got it." "Oh, frog! It's my frog! Oh, my god. You have family?" "Yeah." "Come frog. See you. Bye."*

Example 14 shows how other participants in the Low group, including those who maintained or decreased their story structure score after the short-term residence abroad (e.g., L36, L38, L48), became able to employ connectors in their narrations to depict temporal relations between the clauses in their post-abroad narratives. As can be seen, like Hiro, they moved from hardly using any connectors to employing *'and'* and *'but'* – the relatively simple yet effective connectors that younger L1 children often use to make their narratives more cohesive (Karlsen et al., 2016; Shapiro & Hudson, 1991) – frequently in their narratives after being abroad.

Example 14 Increased use of temporal connectors in the post-abroad session

L29	Pre	(0pt):	*Boy, dog, and hip-hopping frog. Dog and boy. Hip-hopping frog, um, no hip-hopping frog.*
	Post	(3pts):	*The boy and, and dog and hip-hopping frog are at night on the bed. And boy and dog go to bed and sleep. And slowly, hip-hopping frog slowly slowly out of bottle at night. And morning, boy get up and dog get up. But no hip-hopping frog.*
L36	Pre	(3pts):	*He, his name is, um, his name is Cameron. They have a frog. Frog's name is Jack. One day, frog run away.* [note: Cameron refers to the boy]
	Post	(3pts):	*This boy's name is Andrew. He has a frog. Frog's name is Jack. He loves Jack. And this dog is Frank. He is sleeping. Then, Jack run away outside.*
L38	Pre	(4pts)	*One day, frog bottle out. "Good morning, frog. Frog?"*
	Post	(3pts)	*One night, frog out his bottle. And one morning, little boy "I wake up" he said. And "good morning, frog, dog" he said.*

L46 Pre (1pt): Peter, *Gerogero*. Peter lives, *a, mou wakan-nai* [oh, I don't know anymore]. *Peter lives and a Gerogero in the home. Mou kore kurai shika omoi tsuka nai* [I can't come up with anything].

Post (2pts): *Peter lives with a dog and a Gerogero. One day, Peter and dog look Gerogero. But, at night, Gerogero run away from window. Tomorrow morning, Peter and dog look for Gerogero.* [note: Peter refers to the boy, and Gerogero refers to the frog]

L48 Pre (2pts): *They are, etto* [um], *near tree. Etto* [um], *find Gamma-kun.* [note: Gama-kun refers to the frog]

Post (2pts): *I found a frog near the tree. And a frog had a wife. I was surprised*.

L52 Pre (0pt): *Boy, frog, and dog. Etto* [um]*, morning. "Frog, etto* [um] *where?"*

Post (1pt): *A boy and a dog, they like frog. And he is um. Boy and dog are sleeping. And morning, "where is frog?" he says*.

If we look at Examples 13 and 14, we find in general that the participants clearly made progress in producing English utterances, and yet, they seldom used the evaluative expressions (other than character speech) even after their month abroad. In fact, only L36, L47, L48, and L52 began to employ emotion terms (e.g., *He loves Jack* [L36]; *Boy is very angry at his dog* [L47]; *I was surprised* [L48]; *A boy and a dog, they like frog* [L52]). Other participants did not use such affective words nor causal connectors (i.e., subordinators) in their post-abroad narrations. These results are similar to those obtained from the Middle-group participants, suggesting that the short-term RA may not necessarily enhance one's ability to use various evaluative devices. Lastly, like the participants in the

other two groups, the Low-group participants also made errors in the use of articles and verb tense inflections in their post-abroad narratives as shown in Examples 13 and 14. For instance, L29 and L52 in Example 14 did not insert the necessary articles in their post-abroad utterances as seen here: *The boy and, and dog and hip-hopping frog are at night on the bed. And boy and dog go to bed and sleep* (L29); *Boy and dog are sleeping* (L52). Moreover, L39 in Example 13 as well as L36 and L46 in Example 14 were not able to use the appropriate verb forms in their post-abroad narratives such as: *Oh, no! Frog is go out!* (L39); *Then, Jack run away outside* (L36); *But at night, Gerogero run away from the window* (L46).

Taken together, the results presented above show some benefits of the one-month RA for improving one's narrative ability. The closer investigation of the two participants' narrative data revealed how they moved from hardly producing English utterances to using more different words and character speech to build the global theme of the story in their narratives. Moreover, the data obtained from Hiro and other participants in the Low group show that they became able to use a few connectors to express the temporal relations between the characters' behaviors in their post-abroad narrations. Unlike the participants in the other two groups, however, the Low-group participants were not able to provide elaborated descriptions of the local episodic elements, i.e., referential components of the story, in their narratives even after their month abroad. In addition, as with many Middle-

group participants, they rarely inferred and expressed the characters' affective states nor causal relationships between the events, i.e., evaluative components of the story, in their post-abroad narratives. As noted earlier, narrative coherence can be achieved by describing both referential and evaluative aspects of the story (Balaban & Hohenberger, 2020; Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Nakamura, 2009, 2019; Reilly et al., 2004). In this respect, the results may indicate that four weeks of naturalistic language immersion was not sufficient for them to acquire the language proficiency or the skills needed to produce full and coherent narratives in English. Finally, like the participants in the High and Middle groups, the Low-group participants often had trouble using articles or choosing the correct tense morphemes in their post-abroad narratives. The data again show that one cannot acquire the morphosyntactic items absent in one's L1 just by being immersed in the target language for four weeks.

6.4 Summary

This chapter presented the results and discussion from the qualitative analyses of the narrative data obtained from the participants before and after their one-month residence abroad. While the findings from the qualitative analyses confirmed those from the quantitative ones (presented in Chapter 5), they also allowed us to look beyond the scores and further our understanding of *how well* the participants in the High, Middle, and Low groups became able to narrate the story in English after being abroad. Specifically, at the

linguistic level, the results show that the participants in the three groups started to produce longer narratives, using more different vocabulary after their short RA experience. However, with regard to syntactic development, different patterns, which we could not see in the quantitative analyses (section 5.2), were observed between the groups. The High-group participants generally moved from producing simple sentences to composing a variety of complete sentence structures (e.g., simple sentences, complex sentences, and passive sentences), whereas the Middle-group participants tended to move from producing many short phrases and a few simple sentences to composing mainly simple sentences in their narratives after their short experience abroad. As for the participants in the Low group, they generally became able to compose many short phrases and some simple sentences in the post-abroad sessions, while they hardly produced utterances or were only able to produce several short phrases or a few simple sentences in the pre-abroad sessions.

At the story structure level, the results again revealed different patterns of development, which we could not see in the quantitative analyses (section 5.1), between the three groups after their short-term residence abroad. For example, the High-group participants tended to construct a more *coherent* and *complex* story by articulating the sequence of temporally related events, i.e., referential aspect of the story, and by adding inferred feelings of the characters or causal relations between the events, i.e., evaluative aspects of the story, in their post-abroad narratives. Likewise, the Middle-group

participants appeared to become better at producing a narrative, including more detailed information about the sequenced events in their post-abroad narration; yet, their narratives tended to be structurally less complex than those of the High-group participants as they seldom expressed the evaluative aspect of the story. Finally, unlike the participants in these two groups, the Low-group participants seemed to have difficulties giving explicit descriptions of the local episodic elements in their narratives even after a month abroad. However, their narrative data still show that they became able to establish the thematic framework of the story by using character speech effectively in their post-abroad narratives, whereas many of them failed to do so in their pre-abroad ones.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion

This final chapter synthesizes the findings of the thesis and addresses the implications of the results. After stating the research limitations, the chapter concludes with a discussion of avenues for future research.

7.1 Summary of the main findings

This thesis aimed to investigate the impact of one-month residence abroad on L2 narrative development in pre-adolescent learners and explore age effects on their gains in a short-term RA context. Fifty-five Japanese junior high school students (aged 12–14), who engaged in the one-month RA program in the United States or Canada, participated in this study. They were asked to tell in English the story in Mayer's (1969) wordless picture book, *Frog, where are you?*, immediately before and after their short RA experience so as to see the changes (if any) in the ways they narrate the story in English.

The research questions steering the analyses were as follows:

1. How well can Japanese pre-adolescents narrate a story in English after one month's residence abroad?
2. How early must learners start to learn an L2 to benefit from a residence abroad

experience?

In the following subsections, the main findings of this study are summarized with the focus on these two research questions.

7.1.1 The effects of short-term RA on narrative development

To attain a clear picture of the change in the participants' narrative ability after their one-month residence abroad, this study analyzed their narrative data both *quantitatively* and *qualitatively* (after it divided them into the three groups – the High, Middle, or Low group – based on their post-story structure score). The results of the quantitative analyses revealed that the participants tended to score higher on the story structure measure after their short residence abroad, showing that they were likely to include more plot elements in their post-abroad narratives than in their pre-abroad ones. Interestingly, this tendency was found to be more apparent for the participants who gained a high story structure score in the post-abroad session – that is, the distribution of scores between the pre- and post-abroad sessions was significantly larger for the participants in the High and Middle groups than for those in the Low group (section 5.1). The quantitative results also show the differences between the groups on the linguistic measures, with the High group having the higher scores on each linguistic measure followed by the Middle and Low groups in pre- and post-abroad sessions, as well as the improvements within the

groups, especially in terms of the total number of utterances and lexical complexity after a month abroad (section 5.2).

When we looked at the data qualitatively, different patterns of development were observed between the groups more clearly. Specifically, at the story structure level, the analyses revealed that the High-group participants tended to produce a more coherent and complex narrative by articulating the sequenced events of the story (i.e., referential components) and by expressing the causal relations between the events or affective states of the characters (i.e., evaluative components) after their short residence abroad (section 6.1). The Middle-group participants also showed improvements in describing referential aspects of the story; however, unlike the High-group participants, many failed to include evaluative aspects of the story in their narratives even after being abroad (section 6.2). In comparison with the participants in these two groups, the Low-group participants, in general, still showed difficulties in narrating the story in the post-abroad session. Nevertheless, their data demonstrated that they became able to establish the main theme of the story by using character speech effectively in their narratives after a month abroad (section 6.3). At the linguistic level, the analyses revealed that, while the participants could not increase their (morphosyntactic and lexical) *accuracy*, they appeared to improve their *fluency* and *complexity*, given that they tended to produce a longer narrative using more different words after being immersed in English for a month (as also indicated in the

quantitative results). Moreover, the qualitative results indicate their syntactic development (though to a lesser degree for the participants with lower story structure scores, i.e., the High- > Middle- > Low-group participants) after their short RA experience (Chapter 6).

While differences were observed in the degree of the participants' narrative development between the three groups, the general positive outcomes found in this study correspond to the findings reported by Llanes and her colleagues (Llanes & Serrano, 2017; Llanes & Muñoz, 2013; Muñoz & Llanes, 2014), who discovered clear benefits of two- or three-months SA for developing oral skills in child or adolescent L2 learners. This study suggests that pre-adolescents may also achieve L2 gains in narrative ability – one of the oral language skills that "require production of longer and more complex utterances than in everyday oral communication" (Karlsen et al., 2016, p. 1117) – just by being naturally immersed in the target language for only one month. The current participants could improve their English narrative ability possibly because they were able to take advantage of their ability to learn implicitly in the language immersion context without the formal instruction in the SA studies reviewed. My participants could learn English naturally through living with the local homestay families. Alternatively or additionally, their relatively low initial English proficiency may affect their gains in narrative skills. The improvements were less drastic for the Low-group participants (who generally had lower scores on both story structure and linguistic structure measures before residence abroad),

indicating that a certain threshold level of proficiency may be needed to see significant improvements in narrative ability in a short-term RA context.

Returning to Hypothesis 1 (presented in Chapter 1), that all participants become better at producing a narrative in English after one-month residence abroad, the findings do not confirm this hypothesis, given that a few participants could not increase their scores on the story structure scale in the post-abroad session. However, (while the differences were found in the degree of the participants' narrative improvement,) the results from both quantitative and qualitative analyses indicate that most of my participants developed their narrative ability at both story structure and linguistic structure levels after a month abroad.

7.1.2 The effects of age on narrative development in RA contexts

Turning to the second research question on age effects on the participants' narrative development in the short-term RA context, the results of the quantitative analyses show that the participants who started learning English at LABO at an earlier age appeared to be better at producing a narrative in English after being abroad. Specifically, the study revealed that the early starters (who began attending LABO before the age of 55 months or under age 5) tended to score higher than the late starters (who began attending LABO after age 5) on the story structure scale in the post-abroad session (section 5.3). This suggests that learning outcomes in a short-term RA context may be modulated by the actual starting age of L2 learning – the earlier children start learning an L2 in their home country, the

greater their outcomes can be during their later intensive language immersion experience. Moreover, the results may also indicate that four weeks of naturalistic language immersion was particularly beneficial for the early starters, given that: (a) the degree of increase in the story structure score was significantly greater for the participants who gained a higher score than for those with a lower score in the post-abroad session (section 5.1), (b) the participants with a higher story structure score were likely to construct a structurally and linguistically more complex story in the post-abroad session (section 5.2 and Chapter 6), and (c) overall, the participants in this study, whose mean age of starting learning English (at LABO) falls under age 5 (or 4;8), tended to develop their narrative ability after their short residence abroad (sections 5.1 and 5.2 and Chapter 6).

Taken together, our findings here appear to support Hypothesis 2 (proposed in Chapter 1) that the earlier participants start learning an L2 in their home country, the better they benefit from a residence abroad experience. The early starters were able to make greater gains in narrative ability after their short residence abroad, possibly because their linguistic knowledge acquired through LABO activities from a younger age served as a basis for learning English in such naturalistic immersion settings.

Ever since the formulation of CPH by Lenneberg (1967), age has always been the subject of debate in the field of L2 acquisition (as reviewed in Chapter 2). Previous SA research has emphasized that the age of participation in an SA program affects learners' L2

development during SA; that is, child or adolescent learners tend to achieve greater gains than adult learners in oral skills from such learning experiences (e.g., Llanes & Serrano, 2017; Llanes & Muñoz, 2013; Muñoz & Llanes, 2014). While the effects of the L2 learning context in a home country (for example, in the current case, LABO, where – unlike typical foreign language classroom settings – the participants learned English *implicitly* through songs, poems, and stories) should be carefully taken into consideration, the present finding throws light on the possibility that the starting age of L2 learning may also contribute to L2 gains in a short-term RA context.

7.2 Implications

A major educational implication of this study is that even four weeks of naturalistic immersion without any formal language instruction can help pre-adolescent learners to develop their L2. As mentioned at the beginning of this thesis, the number of university students engaging in short-term SA or RA experiences has steadily increased in the past few decades (Llanes & Muñoz; 2009; OECD, 2021), and this trend has also recently been observed with child and (pre-)adolescent L2 learners[5] (Borràs & Llanes, 2020). Despite the growing demand for such intensive immersion experiences among younger learners, most research on language immersion has focused on academic SA

[5] As previously mentioned, the growth rate in the number of participants in SA or RA programs has been altered by the recent pandemic (OECD, 2020).

programs for undergraduates; thus, research on short RA or with child and (pre-)adolescents is rather scarce (as reviewed in Chapters 2 and 3). The present findings showing L2 gains in narrative skills after short residence abroad add to the body of research on language immersion and are valuable in that they may encourage parents to start their children's L2 development earlier to enrich their L2 learning opportunities.

While the present study did not conduct an in-depth observation of the participants' homestay settings, their great gains in narrative ability after the RA program imply that their homestay environment played a decisive role in their English development. In her study of SA high school students in the homestay contexts, Kinginger (2015) highlights the important role of homestay families in giving their hosted students various language learning opportunities. She suggests the possibility that younger learners can benefit more from homestay experiences:

> younger learners may be more likely than their college-aged peers to be received *in loco parentis* as temporary children, and to tolerate and benefit from this arrangement more easily. This may be due in part to the host families' acceptance of legal responsibility for the safety and well being of their charges […] high school students frequently make dramatic gains in proficiency and report numerous opportunities to interact in various settings involving all generations of their host families and the families' social networks (Kinginger, 2015, p. 56).

As described in section 4.1.2, all homestay families in this study were carefully selected by LABO's local partner organizations and encouraged to treat their hosted children as family

members and integrate them into all family activities during the program. Taking these facts into consideration, the general positive outcomes found in this study support Kinginger's (2015) claim and add to the findings about the advantage of earlier participation in RA or SA programs to make homestay experiences more valuable and beneficial.

Finally, the present results showing the effects of starting L2 learning before age 5 on narrative development in the RA context provide a new perspective on the role of age in L2 acquisition. As summarized in section 7.1.2, the present study revealed the tendency for the early starters to achieve greater gains in narrative ability than the late starters from their one-month RA experience. While this finding cannot be simply generalized due to the unique implicit language learning program LABO offered to the participants, it opens a new direction of research regarding the relationship between age and L2 development for learners with the opportunity to take part in intensive language immersion programs.

7.3 Limitations

Other limitations exist in this study besides not being able to generalize from the LABO participants to Japanese children in general. The first limitation pertains to the method of data collection. As previously mentioned, the picture book, *Frog, Where are You?,* has been used extensively in the studies of L1 and L2 development. It has often been described as an *excellent* tool to collect narratives from speakers of different ages and

languages as well as to compare the ways they depict the same pictures (Balaban & Hohenberger, 2020; Heilmann et al., 2016; Nakamura, 2009; Quay & Kano, 2015; Reilly et al., 2004). Indeed, using this book for the narrative task allowed the researcher to closely analyze how and to what extent their narrative abilities improved as a result of the short-term residence abroad. However, as Nakamura (2009) points out, while the use of this book as a narrative-elicitation device comes with many benefits, there is a possibility that it limits the range of linguistic expressions that may be gathered. In this respect, it would have been ideal to include supplementary data to support the findings in the present thesis.

The second limitation is the lack of more precise information on the participants' homestay experiences. As discussed above in section 7.2, we can surmise from our findings that homestay families played a crucial role in encouraging the participants' development in English. It would be interesting to know how the individual participants spent their days with the homestay families or their relationships with each homestay family member and see if such information can also explain their development in narrative ability.

Lastly, while the findings of this study provide useful insights into the effectiveness of short-term language immersion on L2 development, they may need to be interpreted with caution due to the nature of the RA program investigated here. Unlike typical SA programs, RA programs do not offer participants formal language instruction in

the host country. Additionally, as described in section 4.1, the RA program investigated in this study has a long history and is well organized not only in its careful screening of and selection processes for homestay families but also in its provision of monthly orientations and two camps prior to departure to help children prepare well for their forthcoming homestay experiences. These facts should be taken into account (together with the participants' weekly LABO activity experiences) when interpreting the results from this investigation.

7.4 Directions for future research

Both the limitations and implications of the present study discussed above raise questions that point to avenues for future research. First, the limitation suggests the need for supplementary data to strengthen the present findings obtained from the narrative task. The researcher has conducted semi-structured interviews in English with the same participants of this study before and after their one-month residence abroad – oral data not included in this thesis due to time constraints. These data can be used as supplementary data in future investigations to provide more insights about the effectiveness of short-term residence abroad on oral development. Second, as discussed in sections 7.2 and 7.3, a close investigation on the relationship between learners' homestay experiences and their L2 outcomes would be certainly an interesting topic for further research. In this regard, diary data collected from both the participants and their homestay families (also not analyzed in

this study due to time constraints) can be used to explain the differences in the degree of the participants' narrative development. Finally, to gain more in-depth and generalizable knowledge about the link between earlier starts to L2 learning and L2 gains in short-term residence abroad, more studies of learners of different starting ages and different RA programs are needed in the future.

Despite further research that can be done to strengthen the findings from this study, we can still conclude that one month's residence abroad without formal study can enhance pre-adolescent learners' oral development in their target language and that early starters (who begin learning an L2 before age 5) can benefit more from such programs.

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Appendix A

Informed Consent Form

「外国語習得における短期言語イマージョンの教育的効果」に関する研究への
ご協力のお願い

拝啓
私は、国際基督教大学大学院　アーツ・サイエンス研究科　博士候補の狩野萌と申します。現在、博士後期課程において、標記の通り短期言語イマージョン（短期海外滞在）における子ども達の言語発達に関わる調査と研究をしております。ラボ教育センター、生徒の皆様、そして保護者様にはおかれましては、以下ご査収頂き、本研究趣旨、内容、方法をご理解の上、ご協力いただきますよう何卒よろしくお願い申し上げます。

敬具

記

1. 研究目的と意義

近年の急速なグローバル化に伴い、国際的なコミュニケーションツールとしての英語の重要性が増してきたことから、日本においても初等教育から外国語活動（英語）が必修科目として導入されるようになりました。また、この変化と並行して、「英語が使える日本人」育成のため、大学入学前の子どもにおいても短期の英語圏留学を推奨する動きが多く見られるようになりました。しかしながら、こういった短期の海外留学・滞在における言語発達に関しては未だ未知な部分が多く、特に子どもの学習者を対象とした研究は非常に少ないため、その効果は未だ定かではありません。そこで本研究では、長年に渡り児童と青少年の外国語教育及び異文化理解の促進に貢献されてきた公益財団法人ラボ教育センター（以降、ラボ）とその生徒の皆様にご協力いただき、ラボが提供する一ヶ月間の英語圏ホームステイにおける子ども達の言語能力の発達を調査させていただきたいと考えております。そして、本研究を通し、短期間英語圏滞在の言語発達における効果を解明し、ラボにおける言語教育及び日本の英語教育の発展と、同様の学習経験を考えている言語学習者の一助になればと存じます。

2. 研究方法

英語圏への１ヶ月ホームステイを予定している中学１，２年生を対象に致します。また，一般的な日本の中学校に通う（インターナショナルスクール等ではない）者を対象に致します.

以下の方法をもって研究にご協力頂きたいと考えております。

・ホームステイ前後：英語による簡単なナラティブタスク

ホームステイ前後に行うナラティブタスク等につきましては、ラボテューターのご自宅又は普段皆様がラボ活動を行っている教室で行います。ホームステイ前と後に一回ずつご協力いただき、それぞれ 30 分ほどお時間をいただくことになるかと存じます（所要時間につきましては、個人差がございます）。ホームステイ前の調査はご出発 2，3 週間前、ホームステイ後の調査はご帰国後 10 日以内を考えております。

3. 研究への参加協力の自由意思と拒否権

本研究へのご参加・ご協力は自由意思によって行なって頂きます。また、いったんご参加・ご協力にご同意頂いた場合でも、博士論文執筆前いつでも不利益を受けることなくご同意を撤回頂くことができます。本研究へのご参加・ご協力の可否はどうぞご遠慮なくお知らせください。

4. 研究により期待される利益

「短期海外留学・滞在」の需要は著しく高くなってきているにも関わらず、その教育的効果（対象言語への学習意欲・態度変化、異文化理解度の促進、言語能力の発達等）に関する研究は未だ乏しいといっても過言ではありません。特に、ヨーロッパや中国では、「短期海外留学」「短期言語イマージョン」プログラムへの参加者の低年齢化が進んでおりますが、中学生を対象にしたそれらプログラムの持続的効果に関する研究は未だ数が非常に限られております。

そこで今回、御社ご協力の下、1 ヶ月ホームステイの教育的効果を調査することにより、本研究が、日本における英語教育の発展と、英語を外国語として学ぶ環境下にある全ての学習者への一助となればと考えております。また、日本の青少年と諸外国の青少年との相互交流の更なる発展に貢献できればと思います。

5. プライバシー及び個人情報の取扱い

本研究にご参加・ご協力頂く全ての方々（テューター、生徒、生徒のご家族）のプライバシー及び個人情報は、細心の注意をもって管理し、本研究以外の目的で使用することは一切ございません。ご協力いただいた際のデータは研究者自宅にて保管し、音声データ及び音声データを書き起こした書類は全て研究者のパソコンにてパスワードをかけて保管致します。論文作成や研究発表の場におきましては、本研究にご参加・ご協力頂いた方々のお名前は伏せ、個人が特定されないよう配慮致しますので、ご安心ください。

6. 研究結果の公表方法

本研究で得られた結果は、今後、学内だけでなく学会にて公表させて頂くことになります。公表の際にも、上記同様に個人情報保護への配慮を十分に致します。また、執筆致しました博士論文はラボに提出させていただき、研究結果の要旨を本研究にご協力いただきました参加者、保護者様、そしてテューターの皆様にお送りいたします。

7. 研究に関する問い合わせ先

本研究へのご参加・ご協力に関しまして、何かご不明点・ご質問がございましたら、以下までご連絡ください。

連絡先：狩野　萌

国際基督教大学大学院　アーツ・サイエンス研究科　教育・言語教育学博士候補

Email: e179704w@icu.ac.jp, moekanochapman@gmail.com

8. 上記の内容をお読みいただき、ご承諾頂きました折りには、以下にご署名いただきますようお願い申しあげます。

上記内容を十分に理解し、承知した上で、本研究に参加することに同意いたします。

＿＿年＿＿月＿＿日

＜研究参加者＞

保護者氏名：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿　　保護者署名：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

参加者氏名：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿　　参加者署名：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

＜ラボ教育センター＞

職名：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

氏名：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

署名：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

Appendix B

Research Ethics Investigation Result

Notification of Investigation Results

Date: 04/28/2020

To (Applicant): Moe Kano (Adviser:Professor Suzanne Quay)
From: President, International Christian University

Document No.: 2020-02
Name of Research Project: Short-Term Residence Abroad for Japanese Pre-Adolescents: Effectiveness for Developing English Language Proficiency
Responsible for Research: Moe Kano

I herewith notify you of the following results of the Research Ethics Committee's investigation of the above named research project.

1. Decision:
   - ■ Approved
   - ☐ Conditional approval
   - ☐ Changes recommended
   - ☐ Rejected
   - ☐ Not applicable

2. Reason:
   N/A

3. Remarks:
   N/A

※ If changes are recommended, investigation request must be resubmitted.

Signature: