

論文

What Do Students Learn When They Study Abroad? An Exploratory Study

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What do students learn when they study abroad? A trite answer would be “whatever courses they sign up for at the host institution” but that really misses the whole point of being abroad. Students go abroad, driven by the human predilection for novelty, precisely because “abroad” is not like “here.” They may be forced by home-campus curricular constraints to study “there” pretty much what they would have studied “here” but the main experience they sign up for is the difference inherent in being “there.”

The answer, then, lies not in the formal, classroom-based learning governed by curriculum, syllabus and credit-transfer agreements, but in informal, experiential learning, which could also happen in a classroom, or in a train station, a supermarket, or anywhere where the difference of “there” can be observed, noted and reflected upon. A university course conducted abroad which does not require any classroom-based study but gives students time to watch and think affords an opportunity to investigate what kind of informal learning occurs. Such an investigation, motivated by a desire to first understand and then enhance learning abroad, forms the core of this paper.

Background to the Study

The value in a Study Abroad programme, for students, is assumed to be that by being in a different place, a place where things are done differently, they will learn something. Exactly what they are expected to learn and how they are expected to learn it will depend on the particular paradigm which informs the design of the programme.

Vande Berg, Paige, and Lou (2012a) and Bennett (2012) identify three paradigms, or “master narratives” (Vande Berg et al., 2012a), underlying the design of Study Abroad programmes:

- A positivist, or Newtownian, paradigm posits that there is an external and objective world which can be experienced through the physical senses, usually by observation. Part of this objective reality is a “foreign culture” of which students studying overseas can experience significant elements simply by being in the foreign cultural environment. Typical of programmes based on this paradigm would be the nineteenth century European Grand Tour (Vande Berg, 2004) in which participants travelled to foreign countries to acquire knowledge by visiting famous landmarks and attending university lectures given by revered scholars.
- A relativist, or Einsteinian, paradigm abandons the idea of an objective reality in

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favour of relativistic experience. People can experience and make sense of the world only in terms of their frame of reference. Encounters with people whose frames of reference are significantly different from their own enables participants to expand their worldview and grow. Ideally, they will come to recognize not only how others' perspectives differ from their own but also the commonalities between people which constitute a shared humanity. To facilitate such learning, Study Abroad programmes drawing on this paradigm insist on the relativity of experience ("It's not bad or good, it's just different," Bennett, 2012, p. 98) and provide as many opportunities as possible for immersion in the daily life of the country being visited.

- The constructivist, or Quantum, paradigm insists that the only reality is that which a person creates through interaction with his/her environment. The change in environment occasioned by travelling to another country, then, is only one of the elements involved in cultural learning. Equally important is what a learner brings to the experience: habitual ways of seeing and knowing, resulting both from genetic factors and from previous experience (Wexler, 2006). It is the interaction of these two main elements that produces, for each student, a unique series of learning experiences. Study Abroad programmes based on this paradigm usually involve extensive pre-departure priming of students to become aware of what they are bringing to the experience, together with substantial "support" while the students are abroad and, ideally, after they return home, to help them to consolidate and integrate their learning.

The expectations for student learning created by each of these paradigms are clear. A programme based on the positivist paradigm should give students declarative knowledge about the target country, its famous people, high cultural achievements, political system, etc. A relativist paradigm seeks to expand participants' worldview so that it comes to include, minimally, the perspectives of the country visited, maximally, an appreciation of how ways of living and interacting might vary from place to place. Ideally, participants in such a programme will come to see the foreign country not as a "target" country but as a "sample" country (Greenall, 2003), an example of how worldviews might vary. The third, constructivist, paradigm targets participants' personal growth: their awareness of how they make sense of the world, interact with others, deal with difference, etc. and of their ability to respond appropriately to others.

Each paradigm also implies its own learning modality. Under a positivist paradigm, learning occurs through observation. The relativist paradigm privileges experiential learning: learning followed by a period of reflection and adjustment (Kolb, 1984). The constructivist paradigm sees personal growth both as the means and the outcome of learning. Harvey (1979) presents an empirically-based four-stage model of how learning during Study Abroad occurs: the "tourist" stage, in which participants are both charmed and fascinated by their new environment, is followed by the "deviance" stage, when all that is new in the changed environment appears grotesquely deviant. Then comes the "intellectualization" stage in which participants seek explanations for the differences they are experiencing. Finally, comes "assimilation," when the participants begin to feel comfortable, though no longer euphoric, about living in the new environment.

Importantly, Bennett (2012) adds the caveat that Study Abroad programmes seem to be particularly susceptible to “paradigm confusion”: drawing means from one paradigm in the expectation of achieving ends from another paradigm. By doing so, he warns, we are setting up our students for confusion and failure. This mixing of paradigms makes general statements about learning outcomes from Study Abroad programmes difficult to make with any certainty that they will apply to more than one programme. As a result, the researcher interested in learning outcomes is obliged to interrogate programmes one by one. This paper presents one such interrogation.

The Programme

The programme is run for humanities students at a small, co-educational, four-year university in Western Japan. All participants were enrolled, as a supplement to their B.A. studies, in a series of fifteen courses leading to a certificate in Teaching Japanese as a Second (or Foreign) Language, issued by the university (履修, 2017, pp. 67-68). The final course they take in the series is a practicum in Teaching Japanese. Students may choose to take their practicum in Japan or overseas. To facilitate the latter option, the university organizes chaperoned trips to sister schools overseas and provides a financial subsidy to those who take part in these overseas trips (履修, 2017, p. 68).

As an optional, credit-bearing, part of the Japanese Teaching certificate programme, students doing their practicum overseas may also participate in a course called Intercultural Understanding Practice A (履修, 2017, p. 68). Though there are no formal lessons for this course, participants are required to: study the history culture and systems of the country they will visit, before going there; participate in tours of historic buildings, school and/or campus visits, international exchange events, activities involving local people and exchanges with students from the sister school, while in the country; and produce a written report on their encounter with the host country, after returning home (授業概要, 2017, p. 91). Most Japanese Teaching practicum students choose to enroll for this course as well as the practicum. Effectively, it is a way for them to earn credit for the parts of their overseas experience which are not related to the teaching and learning of Japanese.

In school year 2015, there were two overseas trips organized by the university for students choosing to fulfill the requirements of their Japanese Teaching practicum outside Japan (日本語教員養成プログラム, 2016). The trip to South Korea lasted nine days and involved: opportunities to teach and/or observe lessons and interact with students in a junior high school, a high school and two universities; visits to a kindergarten and a Japanese Culture Centre and two days of sightseeing at places of historic interest, one of which included interaction with local university students. Eight students participated in this trip, of whom seven submitted reports for Intercultural Understanding Practice A. The trip to Poland lasted twelve days (eight days in-country) and involved: opportunities to teach and/or observe lessons and interact with students in a university, two days of sightseeing and interaction with local students in two different cities, and a further day of pure sightseeing. Five students took part and all enrolled in and submitted reports for Intercultural Understanding Practice A.

In school year 2016, there were also two trips: one to Australia and the other to

South Korea (日本語教員養成プログラム, 2017). Four students took part in the twelve-day (ten days in-country) Australia trip, all submitting Intercultural Understanding A reports. They taught and observed lessons and interacted with students at a university and a high school, had a brief homestay, participated in a campus tour at one university and an intercultural exchange activity at another, visited a Japanese Culture Centre and had a day and a half of sightseeing in two different cities. The South Korea trip lasted for nine days and had ten participants, all of whom submitted Intercultural Understanding reports. They observed and taught lessons as well as interacting with students out of class at one junior high school and two universities, visited another junior high school and a Japanese Culture Centre and spent two days sightseeing.

Most of the students taking part in the four study trips were Japanese students on their first trip overseas. However, there were some exceptions. Two participants in the 2015 trip to Korea had been there before: one (#1) was visiting for the third time, had relatives there and was a Chinese national of Korean descent, the other (#3) had previously studied there for three weeks. A third (#4) was a Chinese student visiting Korea for the first time. On the 2016 Korea trip, one student (#20) had previously lived in Korea for “a long time” and another (#21) had made an earlier four-week trip there.

It is the post-experience reports written by participants in Intercultural Understanding Practice A in school years 2015 and 2016 that form the focus for the analysis in this paper. Although all the reports are available from published sources (日本語教員養成プログラム, 2016, 2017) which also included the students' names, in order to protect the anonymity of the participants, names will not be used in this paper. Instead, the students are referred to by a coding number (see Table 1).

Instructions to students about the reports they were to submit were given in two different documents as follows:

Submit an Intercultural Experience Report of 2,000 characters or more (日本語教員養成プログラム, 2017, p. 8)

A report on your experience in the country where you did your practicum (including the results of your readings in preparation for the visit) (授業概要, 2017, p. 91)

Students were also told that the report will count for 50% of their grade for the course, the rest of the grade being based on the extent of their participation in activities in-country (授業概要, 2017, p. 91).

Rationale for Studying this Programme

The programme, then, presents unusual opportunities for the investigation of learning outcomes as:

- a) It is not a language study programme, unlike many operated by Japanese universities. This frees both the participants and the researcher of the need to focus on language learning and allows a clearer view of other things they might be learning.
- b) It does not involve taking lessons in the host country. Although participants do spend time both observing and teaching Japanese language lessons at the host institution(s) as part of their Japanese Teaching practicum, they are not present

in the classroom as students: rather, their time in the classroom and interactions with host-country students before and after lessons are treated by the Intercultural Understanding course as experiences from which to learn about the host culture. This focus on learning from the experience of being in the host milieu affords an opportunity to analyse learning outcomes that arise from immersion, rather than instruction, in the host culture and language.

- c) Overt instruction and preparation for the programme focus mainly on the Japanese teaching practicum rather than on intercultural learning opportunities it presents (日本語教員養成プログラム, 2017, pp. 5-8). In general, thorough pre-departure orientation to notions of intercultural understanding is considered to be a vital element in the success of Study Abroad programmes (Vande Berg, Paige, & Lou, 2012b). However, in this case the paucity of such preparation reduces the possibility that participants will be primed to report on the kind of learning they think the assessor of their reports is looking for, and strengthens the assumption that their reports represent unprompted reflection on what they have learnt.
- d) The instructions for writing the reports are couched in the broadest possible terms. Apart from the general title of “Intercultural Experience Report” they are not prompted to focus on anything in particular. This should encourage participants to write about whatever is most salient in their experience, instead of beginning from a pre-conceived notion of what they should be writing about.

The Study

The study consisted of a close reading of the 26 reports submitted by students who participated in the programme in 2015 and 2016. These reports have been published (日本語教員養成プログラム, 2016, 2017) and are therefore in the public domain.

Normally, a content analysis of documents produced by participants would require triangulation of analyses by several independent readers in order to remove the bias inherent in the subjective understanding of a single reader (Krippendorff & Bock, 2008). However, as this is a preliminary, exploratory study, analysis by only one reader is used here. Future studies will seek to verify understanding by reference to other readers.

The reports were first read through to provide general impressions and an understanding of students' perspectives on what they had learnt. Closer attention was then paid to both explicit and implicit claims by participants about things they had learnt, which were categorized and tabulated. Categories were suggested naturally by the contents of the reports themselves, with any student reflection which appeared to straddle more than one category being coded for each of the relevant categories. Several further readings of the reports were then conducted in order to improve reliability.

Although the reports were produced by participants in four different programmes visiting three countries over two years, it was decided to regard them as forming a single data set, rather than four, three or two separate ones. This is because the focus of this investigation is not on what participants learnt about a particular country or at a particular time, but on learning in Study Abroad contexts in general.

Results

Overall Impression

The looseness of the instructions for compiling the reports, seen as an advantage for this research project, appears to have presented a challenge for many of the participants: there was no consensus across the reports on what they should write about. While some recounted a chronology of lessons taught, visits to museums and intercultural exchange events, others engaged in analysis of their own strengths and weaknesses as teachers in training. Most reports do contain observations of the host city, country or university and reflections on those observations; some linking together a series of observations on a single topic while others record reflections apparently at random. A few show evidence of research into particular aspects of the host society (#17 – traditional clothes, #18 – food culture, #23 – manners) which goes beyond simple observation and reflection, and appears to have been conducted post-experience.

In general, the reports follow the usual conventions of a *kansobun* (感想文 – sometimes called “reflection papers” in English), the only form of modern-day writing in Japanese that is explicitly taught and practiced in Japanese schools (Hirose & Sasaki, 1994). In this genre, the writer records observations about an event (a movie, a lecture, a school trip) and then comments on it, using a very restricted vocabulary for the commentary (Ross, 2002): よかった [“It was good.”], 面白かった [“It was interesting.”], 楽しかった [“It was fun.”], 勉強になりました [“I learnt something from it.”]. Large parts of many of the reports analysed here consist of chronologies of experiences interspersed with one or more of these evaluative terms (with the addition of 美味しかった [“It was delicious.”], a reflection of the attention paid to food in the reports). While the use of these stock terms fulfills the expectations of a *kansobun*, they do not necessarily reveal the writer’s true feelings about an event, nor do they provide the kind of detail that would be useful to this analysis. In many ways the use of these terms represents an avoidance of reflection, or at least an avoidance of reporting on any reflection that has taken place.

From the overall tone of the reports, however, it is clear that, for all participants, the Study Abroad experience was a positive one. Almost all of them go beyond the expected 楽しかった [“It was fun.”] to say とても楽しかった [“It was great fun.”]. Only one (#4) reported being homesick. Two (#18 and #21) said that their enjoyment of the experience came as a surprise to them: they had not expected to enjoy it. Furthermore, almost all the participants said they would like to travel overseas again, most to re-visit the country of their practicum but several also adding “and other countries.”

While all reports record observations about the country visited, some also make comparisons with the home country (usually Japan, but in one case China). These comparisons sometimes extend to participants’ viewing themselves, their abilities and attitudes in the light of people they meet overseas.

More Detailed Analysis

Table 1 gives an overview of the things that each participant commented on in the reports. Across the top is the code for each participant and information about where and when their programme took place. Down the left side is the code for each of the categories (see sub-headings below for a key to the coding). These are divided into two parts:

comments about the host environment; and comments about themselves. A check mark in a particular cell of the table represents one or more comment by a participant that fell into that category.

Table 1
Participants Commenting on Each Topic

	2015												2016													
	Korea						Poland						Australia				Korea									
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26
Comments about the host environment																										
a	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
b				✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓			✓			✓	✓	✓				
c	✓				✓		✓				✓		✓					✓		✓			✓		✓	✓
d		✓		✓	✓			✓		✓			✓	✓			✓									
e	✓	✓												✓			✓		✓							✓
f		✓								✓	✓								✓							✓
g				✓	✓			✓														✓				
h	✓	✓															✓		✓							
i	✓													✓							✓	✓				
j	✓											✓							✓							
k													✓	✓						✓						
l	✓							✓															✓			
m				✓					✓													✓				
n				✓						✓												✓				
o							✓						✓	✓												
Comments about themselves																										
p								✓	✓					✓	✓	✓			✓					✓	✓	✓
q	✓				✓				✓		✓															✓
r				✓									✓						✓					✓		✓
s		✓												✓	✓	✓										

The first thing to note from the table is that, while some participants reported learning many different things, others' reports cover quite a narrow range of topics. There are two reasons for this: in some cases (eg., #24 and 25) the reports focused so much on what the participant did that very little attention is paid to what they might have learnt from it; in others (eg., #6) the report includes in-depth comments on one particular topic so that the observations/reflections are deep rather than broad. Most participants, though, eschew depth to offer reports on a wide variety of topics.

The other salient point about Table 1 is the recurrence of similar topics in many of

the reports. Eighteen of the 26 reports deal with (a.) food and foodways; ten with the foreign language abilities of the local people; nine with impressions of local students. So, while the majority of the reports are broad rather than deep, a lot of them do cover similar territory, regardless of the country visited by the participants.

Comments about the host environment.

a. Food and drink.

Over two thirds of the reports mention food and/or drink, and many of them deal extensively with the topic. Several reports (#1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 14, 17, 18, 22 and 23) list specific dishes eaten by the participants. These are usually characterized as 美味しかった (“It was delicious.”), a stock *kansobun* term, although some participants say it took several days for them to begin to appreciate food in Korea (#5 and 17) and one (#23) reported severe gastric distress.

The variety of new food and drinks available, while attractive to some (#1 and 6), was overwhelming for others (#21). Participants in the Australia programme were particularly challenged by what they saw as a lack of fresh vegetables (#14 and 16), a preponderance of fried food (#16) and a diet based on bread rather than rice (#14 and 15). #6 complained of the lack of moderation in Korean food which was either very spicy or very sweet. #14 was distressed at having to buy carbonated water in Poland, while #6 was impressed by the size, colour and variety of fruit juices available in Korea. The issue of Koreans’ eating dog meat is raised by only one participant, #20, who had previous experience of living in Korea. She says that other participants asked whether it was true that Koreans eat dog meat and looked at her differently after she confirmed that it is.

Attempts were made to generalize from specific dishes to national cuisines. Korean food is often characterized as “spicy” (#1, 4, 6, 7, 17, 18, 22 and 23); Polish food as “oily and sweet” (#9) and Australian food as “oily” (#16) and as “strong tasting and high calorie” (#15). #18 presents a history of Korean cuisine which appears to be based on research either before or after her visit to Korea. Similarly, #17 writes at length about the history of *kimchi*, referencing a *kimchi* museum in Seoul.

Several participants extended their observation from the food itself to tableware, with comments on the availability of spoons (#22) and their use when eating both rice and soup (#18), the size of chopsticks and the material from which they are made (#22 and 18). The writer of report #18, again apparently drawing on her research, offers a historical explanation for this.

Serving customs in restaurants and bars also attract attention. A number of participants (#4, 6, 7, 17, 21 and 23) commented on the Korean restaurant custom of adding various condiments (especially, *kimchi*) and, in some cases, coffee and dessert (#7) free of charge when a main course is ordered and supplying as much of these extras as the customer wants. Another Korean food custom commented on was eating rice and soup together (#18 and 22). #6 reports that serving staff in restaurants in Korea cut food into bite-sized pieces, but this is not mentioned by any other participants. The Korean taboo against picking up plates or dishes to eat from them caught #22’s attention. #20, who had previous experience of living in Korea, commented at length on Korean custom surrounding who pays for what when a group eats out together. #11 reports that in bars

in Poland only drinks are served and customers bring their own food.

In comments about the price of food and drink, in general the participants found things to be inexpensive (eg., #11), but #13 writes about the high price of bottled water, and even higher price of fruit juice, in Australia. Portion sizes occasioned several comments from participants in the Poland and Australia programmes (#9, 11 and 14), all of whom found they were served more than they could eat. The Korean custom of serving as much *kimchi* and other condiments as the customer wishes left several participants with very full stomachs and a number commented that, unlike Japan, in Korea it is possible to have a very filling meal for little money (#4 and 21).

Comparisons with Japan are quite common in the references to food. The spiciness of Korean food is said to be unlike anything that can be experienced in restaurants in Korean restaurants in Japan (#4, 17, 18, 22 and 23). Similarly, Polish drinks were said to be stronger than those in Japan (#11) and Australian desserts sweeter (#15). This left several participants craving Japanese food (#14 and 23) and led #6 to assert that “Japanese food is best.” #14 mentions the joy of eating an “emergency” pot of ramen noodles brought from Japan. However, some saw similarities with Japanese food (#4, 6 and 18) and one participant concluded that both Japan and Australia are likely to have a high rate of diabetes (#15).

b. Foreign language abilities of local people

A lot of students commented on the foreign language abilities of the people they met and overheard. All of the comments were positive. Participants in Korea (#4, 21 and 23) were impressed by the amount of Chinese and Japanese they heard on the streets. #23, who had visited Korea previously, commented that the main foreign language on the streets was now Chinese, as opposed to four years ago when it was Japanese, and attributed this to an increase in Chinese tourists. In Poland, what impressed participants was the ease with which people they met used English (#8, 9, 10 and 11) and the number of foreign languages they study (#12). In Australia it was the dedication that students of Japanese brought to their studies (#14 and 16).

c. Students

Participants encountered students in their host country, from junior high school to university age, both in classes they taught or observed and out of class at cross-cultural exchange events or as companions as they explored the city. They spent more time with students than with other members of the host community.

They found the students to be friendly (#7), active and responsive in class (#7, 13 and 21) and full of energy (#1, 19 and 24). They were impressed by the students’ Japanese ability (#11, 13 and 26) and their passion for studying it (#11), as well as their knowledge of *manga* characters (#19). #1 noted that Korean junior high students wore red lipstick in class, something not allowed in Japan. The Australian students’ active engagement in learning Japanese caused #13 to reflect on the way he had been taught English and to wish the classroom atmosphere at home had been similar.

d. Cities

Perhaps not surprisingly for study trips that allocated time to sightseeing, several participants commented on the cities and buildings around them. Comments (#2, 5 and

10) tended to be that they were 美しい [beautiful], another stock *kansobun* term.

Comparisons abounded here. There was agreement that buildings in Korea were unlike those in Japan (#4, 5 and 18) or China (#4). Buildings in Poland were said to be “European-looking” and “Western” (#9). Two visitors to Australia (#14 and 15) were able to contrast the atmosphere they felt in Sydney with that in Melbourne. Only one participant (#18) tried to explain the reasons for the differences in atmosphere felt in foreign cities, saying that Korea was part of a continent, unlike Japan which is surrounded by sea.

e. History

For some of the participants (#1, 2, 15, 18, 20 and 25), visits to museums as part of their study trip gave them an opportunity to learn about the history of the country they were staying in. None of them was specific about what they had learnt there, although both #20 and #25 mentioned seeing a different side to Korean wars with Japan while visiting the Korean Independence Museum. #2 expressed an interest in the daily life of people long ago, but beyond admiring a house made of grass, again gave no specifics. #18 was prompted to muse on the similarities of Stone Age societies and how migration and outside influences affect the way people live now.

f. War

Alongside the comments about history were some pertaining to the dark side of history: wars, torture and cruelty. Both #2 and #25 write about visiting sites that told them of suffering and cruelty resulting from wars between Korea and Japan. #2 concludes that war is so unimaginably cruel that there should be no more war. #25 comments that it is best to know of such history. #12, who visited a war-damaged but rebuilt Polish city, echoes #25's sentiment that it is best to know of such things. #24 simply says that visiting a war museum made her think a lot. #20 also refers to learning about damage done to Korea in wars with Japan but makes no further comment.

g. Shopping

Relatively few comments referred to shopping. Those who did comment were pleased with the interesting things they found to buy (#4 and 5) and with the inexpensive prices (#5 and 22). There was surprise that department stores were located in tourist areas (#4 and 22) and that they stayed open late into the evening (#22).

Two customs regarding shopping occasioned comment: the practice of selling plastic bags at stores in Poland (#9), rather than providing them for free, and the provision of extra goods for free in Korea (#22): “In Korea, whichever shop you buy things at, they give you extra things for free” wrote the participant.

h. Traditional culture

Four participants commented on the traditional culture of the countries they visited, all on the basis of visits to museums. #1 and #3 reported being impressed by traditional clothes, with #3 also mentioning traditional buildings. #20 was similarly appreciative of traditional handicrafts. #17 gives details of the historical development of Korean clothes, the writer having apparently done some research on the topic.

i. People

There were only a few comments about the people the participants met in each

country, though this section should be read in conjunction with the section about “Students” since most of the people the participants met were students. Three participants (#1, 22 and 23) found the people they met “lovely” and “friendly” while #23 also reported they were energetic. #15 noted that people in Australia were multi-ethnic.

j. Transport

Only three participants commented on transport. #1 found the Seoul subway easier to use than the one in Beijing; and #12 felt the buses in Poland maneuvered very quickly. #20 tells the story of a taxi that set off while its trunk, loaded with suitcases, was open and the driver thought nothing of it.

k. Interest in Japan

Three of the participants (#12, 13 and 21) expressed their surprise that the people they met were interested in Japan and things Japanese.

l. Manners

There were three comments about local manners. Two of them related to smoking: #1 was surprised at the number of people in Korea smoking outside restaurants and stores; #8 was similarly struck by the number of cigarette butts thrown away on Polish streets. #23’s comments on Korean manners are more extensive, including not picking up dishes while eating from them, the correct posture for honouring superiors when drinking or travelling with them, and conformity with rules about giving up train seats to the elderly. The detail of #23’s comments suggests research into Korean manners.

m. Toilets

Two participants (#4 and 22) commented on toilets they had used in which toilet paper could not be flushed. A third (#9) mentioned having to pay to use a public toilet.

n. Communication style

Three participants made comments about the communication styles of people in their host community. #4 perceived the Korean communication style to be more direct and less humble than that in Japan. #22 also remarked that Korean students, even apparently shy ones, did not hesitate to give their opinion when asked. #11 commented on the Polish custom of greeting people with a hug.

o. Education

After spending time in classrooms, it is not surprising that some of the participants had comments about education. They all noted things that contrasted with Japan: free kindergartens, both public and private, with good facilities (#7), science lessons in which students actively take part in experiments (#13) and foreign language lessons that are fun (#14). Only #7 extended her thinking beyond the classroom to wonder what effect the provision of free kindergartens might have on taxation.

Other things

The following topics were mentioned by only one or two of the participants:

- *Japan-Korea relations.* #3 reflected on the troubled history of relations between Japan and Korea and realized that in Korea she had met only people who liked Japan.
- *Customs.* #12 noticed that people in the street in Korea walk closer together than in Japan and commented that customs differ from place to place.
- *Public WiFi.* Both #9 and #22 commented on the availability of free public WiFi.

- *Landscape.* #12 found Poland very flat.
- *Origami technique.* #5 encountered a new technique for folding paper in Korea.
- *Water use.* #13 discovered that water is a limited, expensive resource in Australia when told not to use too much when bathing or showering.

Comments about themselves

p. Personal growth

Altogether, eight of the respondents noted that they had grown or developed personally as a result of their Study Abroad experience. Three of them (#14, 15 and 16) simply noted personal growth but without elaborating on it. Two others (#16 and 24) said their ability to communicate had grown, but again without elaboration. #19 expressed a desire to grow and to discover a new self by talking with people from other countries.

It was #20 who provided the most detailed account of personal growth. Noting in general that she had learnt things that would help her in living in a Japan that is open to the outside world, she explained that she had first understood that to interact with others it is necessary to talk about many different things, not that topics of interest to herself. Further, she realized that she had previously avoided interacting with people who had different values to her own but now understood how to talk and come to an understanding with them. #21 expressed something similar, but more self-critically, saying that he was ashamed of how narrow his worldview had been.

q. Wanting to know more

Several of the participants said they would like to know more after completing their study trips. Four of them (#1, 10, 12 and 26) wanted to know more about the history and culture of the place they had visited. One (#26) also wanted to know more about Japan. Another (#5) wanted more interaction with local people to get to know them better.

r. Communication strategies

Five participants noted changes in their own communication strategies brought about by contact with people they met. #26 simply noted that she learnt how to communicate across languages and cultures. #13 commented that this was difficult but could be achieved by using short sentences. #24 said she had made friends without using words. #4 said she spoke more directly than she would in Japan.

s. English ability

Four of the participants, including three who visited Australia, made comments about their English abilities. Although one (#16) said she had become more confident in her English by using it to communicate with native speakers, the other three (#2, 14 and 15) had become aware of their lack of ability and wrote about their determination to study English harder. As to why, #14 said that with more English he would be able to stay longer in Australia, #2 said it would make it easier to travel internationally and #15 wanted to use English to tell foreigners about the good things in Japan.

Discussion

The participants in these four programmes clearly had little difficulty identifying physical elements of the host environment that were different from things they had encountered before, especially when these things were placed in front of them, as with food in a restaurant (18 respondents), students in a classroom (nine respondents), or

buildings on a city tour (eight respondents). The preponderance of comments about food is a natural consequence of the need for a human body to be fed: like it or not, a Study Abroad participant is going to encounter local foods several times a day. In this light, it is surprising that comments about transport are not more prevalent, as the need to move about is almost as basic as the need for nutrition. It may be that participants focused on their destinations rather than the environments in which they were making journeys.

Beyond food, though, there is a strong focus on the visual: cities, buildings, traditional cultural artefacts, stores, toilets, all physical objects that can be seen and do not require any interaction. The most frequently mentioned aspects of behavior in the host environments were also things that can be readily observed: use of foreign languages, behavior in classrooms, manners.

Things that require interaction beyond the visual and gustatory, such as history, interest in Japan, communication styles, and education, attract fewer, but more thoughtful, comments. While eight participants identified Korean food as “spicy”, only one presented information about the history of *kimchi*. While several noted differences in eating instruments in Korea, only one investigated the stories and traditions that have led to the use of metal chopsticks.

All of these observations belong to a positivist paradigm (Bennett, 2012; Vande Berg et al., 2012a) as they constitute declarative knowledge. Based on the assumption that there is such a thing as “Korean (or Polish, or Australian culture,” they allow participants to move effortlessly from “I ate some *kimchi*. It was spicy.” to “Korean food is spicy.” or from “The Australian students responded well.” to “Australian students are so positive and full of energy.”

The danger here, of course, is over-generalisation, the much-maligned stereotyping which leads short-term visitors to extrapolate from their limited experience to make statements about the lives of millions of people, most of whom they have never met. There is a hint of this, for example in #22’s statement that: “In Korea, whichever shop you buy things at, they give you extra things for free.” As evidence for this, she cites free *kimchi* in restaurants and free sample bottles when buying cosmetics. Similarly, #16’s assertion that “Australians like sweet things.” suggests over-generalisation.

In terms of Harvey’s progression, almost all the comments would be classified as “tourist.” Participants are almost universally charmed and fascinated by their encounters with difference. The strongest exception is #20’s distaste at the taxi driver who knowingly drives with the trunk open. However, #20 is reacting here as an insider to Korean society, where she has previously spent some time, feeling shame at the impression the taxi driver’s behavior will have on her classmates. Apart from several reports of difficulty digesting foreign foods, the only other negative emotions registered in these reports are directed not to the host environment but to aspects of life in Japan, such as #14’s wish that foreign language lessons in Japan were active and interesting like those in Australia, or #22’s wish that Japanese students were more out-going and able to express their opinions, like the ones she met in Korea.

In the short time the participants spent in the host environment, then, they have not entered Harvey’s (1979) second stage of “Deviance” (finding the host society’s ways

deviant). However, there is evidence of what Harvey calls “intellectualization”, seeking for explanations of what they observe. It is not clear whether #17 and #18 researched Korean foodways, #17 traditional clothing and #23 before, during or after their time in Korea, but their comments on these topics go beyond what could be observed in “tourist” mode and suggest an interest in understanding these topics. Most of the participants did not pursue deeper understanding of what they saw, as evidenced by the rather anodyne reaction of all but one participant (#18 again) to information presented in museums: 勉強になりました [“I learnt something from it.”]. Three of the 26 students, then, do show signs of Harvey’s “intellectualization” and another four (#1, 10, 12 and 26), who express an interest in knowing more about the host country show the potential for reaching such a stage. It would be unreasonable to expect that, in such a short period in the host environment, any of the participants would progress to Harvey’s “assimilation.”

Not all the comments in these reports reflect the positivist paradigm. The relativist paradigm expects learning in the area of participants’ worldview: that they will come to see the host environment as an alternative way of seeing the world and, by extension, that their own worldview is only one of many possible ones. There is evidence that this broadening of perspective has occurred, to a limited extent, for some of the participants.

While #6’s assertion that “Japanese food is best” is the most egregious example of ethnocentrism, more positive comparisons also indicate a single worldview. When #1 says that the subway in Seoul is easier to use than the one Beijing, or #22 that Korean food is delicious “unlike Japan”, they are still assuming that there is a single yardstick for ease of use or deliciousness against which subway systems and food can be judged. A relativist perspective would see multiple yardsticks, none any better than the others.

#3 appears to glimpse the possibility of an ethnorelative position when she comments that, during a visit to the Korean Independence Museum, she realised that so far she had interacted only with Koreans who liked Japan. The acknowledgement that there were good reasons why some Koreans might not like Japan puts her on the threshold of seeing the world from multiple perspectives (or two, at least). Similarly, #25 reports having seen Japanese-Korean relations from a different side when visiting the same museum. #16, who ate at a Japanese restaurant in Australia and says it gave her an appreciation of how Japan is seen from overseas also stands on the threshold.

Two participants appear to have crossed the threshold and viewed at least some aspects of life from an ethnorelative perspective, although their accounts of this perspective are short and constitute musings rather conclusions. #18, in the Korean National Museum, noticing the similarities between Stone Age artefacts from Japan and Korea, sees the two societies as having developed from similar roots, their paths diverging as a result of different migration patterns. #4, observing Korean students studying Japanese, realises that different countries promote their own ways of living and try to defend them against each other. There is no evidence that either of these participants has applied this kind of relativistic thinking beyond the context in which it occurred, but the seeds have undeniably been planted.

As for the third paradigm in Bennett (2012) and Vande Berg et al.’s (2012a) model, the constructivist paradigm, the comparatively large number of participants reporting

that they underwent personal growth as a result of their Study Abroad experience is encouraging. It is also in line with self-reports from other Study Abroad programmes throughout the world (Pellegrino, 1998). However, Vande Berg et al. (2012a) warn that such impressions, however strong, are often illusory and are usually not supported by psychometric tests. Disappointingly few of the participants in the current study offer details of their personal development, so this may be the case here, too.

Three of the participants do attempt to describe their growth. #10 writes of changing from being a person who avoids contact with people who see the world differently to one who now sees that communication and mutual understanding is possible. #21 says he has had a narrow worldview but has learnt to expand it. #6's growth seems to be more aspirational than real: she wants to discover herself through further interaction with people from other countries with different values.

Do these three self-reports represent a real change in the way their writers try to make sense of themselves and the world? An answer to this question is beyond the scope of this study, but there is at least a hint here of the kind of personal growth made possible by these Study Abroad programmes.

Conclusion

What do students learn when they study abroad? The answer depends very much on the design of the programme. Programmes were selected for this study precisely because of the laissez-faire nature of their design. To a greater extent than with many other programmes, students were left to their own devices in writing reports about their experiences. The things that they thought worthy of comment in their reports loaded heavily on the kind of learning outcomes expected with a positivist paradigm, but with strong hints that some learning had occurred for some students that would fit both relativist and constructivist paradigms.

The implications for future programme design are:

- a) Learning will occur naturally, regardless of the intentions of the designer.
- b) There is a danger that experiential learning, based as it is on observation and reflection, will lead to over-generalisations and potentially dangerous stereotypes. Intervention by a teacher or chaperone could reduce this risk.
- c) Even in a relatively unstructured, short-term programme, some participants will learn not only declarative knowledge about the host community, but also how to take a relativist perspective on ways of living and being, and to develop and grow in understanding themselves and the world. Deliberate support of students' personal and psychological development before, during and after a programme should make these latter two goals attainable for a larger number of participants.
- d) Many students return from Study Abroad programmes with unanswered questions the answers to which could help them to deepen and broaden their understanding of the host environment, the home environment, themselves and the way they make sense of the world. Some of these are questions need factual answers that will lead to new knowledge, others are matters for exploration and thought, perhaps resulting in a changed worldview or sense of self. It is important to support participants and nurture their questions after they return to the home

country so they may continue to grow and benefit from their time abroad.

The exploratory nature of this study means that conclusions presented here should be seen as tentative and suggestive. However, they do illuminate a path for further research into Study Abroad programmes, their participants and what they can learn.

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