

# Study Abroad: Japanese Learners of English in an American Setting (Part III)

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## The Informal Situation

My subjects are recruited from three different institutions—the University of Oregon, Lane Community College, and the American English Institute, the language school attached to the UO. The minimum TOEFL scores for admission are 520 at UO and 475 at LCC, respectively. AEI students are still working to get these or higher scores. There are a few exceptions, but it is reasonable to rank UO students as advanced, LCC students as intermediate, and AEI students as lower.

The informal situation includes all personal activities besides schooling outside the classroom (classroom activities). All the information analyzed here is based on 23 students' one-week journals. Since so many things happen in a day, some details may not have been reported. Some activities were dropped because they were judged irrelevant. Some activities may not have been recorded because the students considered them private. It is my impression that the reported activities represent only a fraction of students' actual daily activities, partially because I asked them to report only those daily activities involving English and omit the activities involving Japanese. I believe that major events are properly reported in the diaries. By the same token, the time students claim to have spent on each incident is not perfectly accurate, since they relied exclusively on memory. But again, time differences might be minimal. The data are generally reliable to evaluate the activities of students' daily life. The one-week period covers their typical daily activities, including weekend activities.

When I asked my subjects to write a log, the conditions were that they should report only activities when they speak, listen, read and write in English. More specifically, students were asked to report social activities with other non-Japanese Asians, social activities with native speakers, preparation for classes, entertainment in English, (reading, watching, listening, attending, playing) and day-to-day activities requiring them to use English (restaurant, drugstore, laundry). The only exception I asked for was to record social activities with Japanese friends, simply because it is my impression that most Japanese students spend much time with each other. My

goal was to find out whether or not this socialization may curtail their progress in spoken English.

As for TV and radio programs and music, students were to report only the programs they concentrated on watching or listening to without doing anything else. As for parties attended, students were asked to report the languages used and the nationalities of the attendants precisely. Telephone conversations that lasted longer than 5 minutes were also to be reported, including the language spoken.

### **I The kinds of activities reported in informal situation**

The nature of the activities are analyzed under the categories of (1) speaking & listening, (2) listening, (3) reading, and (4) writing.

#### **(1) Speaking and listening**

This activity is divided into two sub-categories— (a) conversation with one or a few people and (b) conversation with many people.

##### (a) Conversation with one or a few people.

This is the fundamental pattern of conversation, since it provides the ideal conversational situation without any obstacles. The speakers can concentrate on their conversation. This is an ideal situation for Japanese students to learn to speak English. The partners pay careful attention to what the other says and try to understand each other. This stimulates students to keep talking and helps them develop their speech habits. In general, people are expected to keep their conversation flowing and to make it interesting. If both sides share the same interests, the conversation flows comfortably and excitingly.

Actually, Japanese students are aware of the importance of this situation to enhance their speaking ability and make efforts to create this situation. In the dormitory, they try to do things together with non-Japanese roommates wishing to have as many opportunities as possible to speak English. When they move into an apartment, they tend to have a roommate with whom they can always speak English.

In a situation with a roommate, their conversation partner plays an important role. With the lower level students (A.E.I. level), the partner is supposed to be patient enough to listen to them and guide them through the conversation step by step. In this sense, the instructors of the language school and tutors are the most reliable conversation partners for AEI students. The advanced students (UO level) want to conduct their conversation as they like, but their English is still not good enough. Their partner is supposed to be someone with whom they can talk on friendly terms but who is more skilled in English (preferably native speakers). They expect their partners to answer their questions when they get confused. At the advanced level, conversation partners are non-Japanese friends and roommates rather than professors

and tutors.

If there are more than two conversation participants, the conversation is carried by all and a language-handicapped student may be left out. Consideration for their handicap is desirable for the students, but it doesn't easily happen, even if the partners try to be considerate. Therefore, Japanese students, especially beginners, prefer a person-to-person situation.

### 1. Conversation with an instructor (office hours)

Conversation with an instructor (professor) occurs often during the instructor's office hours. In this case the conversation topics are mostly limited to the students' academic work, such as the class schedule, homework, upcoming examinations, or the results of an exam.

For the lower-level students, this is a good opportunity to make sure they are making proper progress. They have difficulty understanding spoken English and their spoken English is not grammatically correct and does not sound proper. They are confused and feel insecure. The instructors are the primary persons to increase their confidence and facilitate their progress. If a student has problems, the instructor can give proper advice and encourage the student to study. The instructors are assuming the role of counselor.

Some advanced students make actively use of office hours and try to exchange ideas about special subjects which are not talked about in classroom conversation. Talking to a professor during office hours provides the students with a good introduction to speaking in a formal situation and using formal language. Some examples reported below:

- (a) Asked questions about a term paper or an examination or a grade. (Nos. 2, 15, 25)
- (b) Had my paper corrected. (Nos. 7, 8)
- (c) Explained my opinion about his lecture. (No. 8)

2. Conversation with a tutor (AEI students are all assigned to a tutor once a week for an hour to practice English outside the class with a native speaker.)

All language school students are very appreciative of this program because it offers the ideal situation they desire. The instruction is given on a person-to-person basis and the students can ask whatever questions they want in a relaxed, casual atmosphere (such as in a coffee shop).

Topics are chosen based on the students' interests (e.g. their hobbies, their schooling, etc.) to make them feel more comfortable talking. But in most cases, students cannot carry their conversation very long and the tutors end up helping them with their homework. In order to avoid feeling ill at ease, the tutors usually take their students out for a walk (sometimes to the museum, market, stores, movies, etc). This makes it easier for the tutors to explain American culture. This situation improves with the students' progress. In successful cases, the student and tutor can

talk about one thing or another sitting in one place for over an hour. But in the worst cases, the tutor can only talk one-sidedly, falling out of their role of language instructor. Some reported examples are as follows.

1. Had the tutor check my homework. (No. 21)
2. Taught the tutor Japanese (No. 13), Japanese slang. (No. 23)
3. Talked about the festivals of Japan and America. (No. 12)
4. Talked about my part-time job in Japan. (No. 12, part-time job tutoring)
5. Corrected my mispronunciation of a few words. (No. 13)
6. Talked with the tutor about the results of a grammar test and a book report and got advice about a Halloween gift. (No. 27)

### 3. Conversation with roommates (and friends)

Judging from my subjects' examples, topics of interest vary as much as their personalities differ. Since they talk about many different topics, they can increase their vocabulary in many different fields. The important thing is that they can talk about all kinds of topics in a relaxed and comfortable situation without the pressure of having to learn anything from the situation. Even with friendly tutors, students feel pressure because they feel obligated to learn something from them. But with their roommate, students can speak almost unconsciously without any worries. This type of conversation increases their speaking ability tremendously, because they can talk a lot and form natural speech habits.

A typical and ideal situations is two roommates sitting together on a couch, watching TV and talking about the program on TV. In order to create this comfortable learning situation, Japanese students tend to choose a roommate who speaks English as well as or better than they. In this sense, American students are ideal. However, in the dormitory it is in general difficult to have a good American roommate, because many American students have a set lifestyle that tends to make Asian students feel alienated. In terms of language, American students are ideal, but in terms of lifestyle they have too strong an identity and do not compromise. Thus, more than we expect, many Japanese choose Asian roommates. Culturally, they share a more compatible sense of values and are easy to get along with. From the perspective of acquiring language skills, Japanese like to room with Singaporeans and Hongkonese. Some examples are as follows:

1. Talked about cultural differences with my (Taiwanese) roommate. (No. 8)
2. Talked about a class with my (Singaporean) roommate. (Nos. 10, 13)
3. Talked about shopping with my (Singaporean) roommate. (Nos. 10, 25)
4. Talked about the party with my (Singaporean) roommate. (No. 10)
5. Asked my (Singaporean) roommate unknown words used in TV programs. (No.10)
6. Consulted with my (Singaporean) roommate about how he seasons his cooking.

- (No. 10)
7. Consulted with my (Singaporean) roommate about how he packs his personal things in a suitcase. (No. 10)
  8. Celebrated (American) roommate's birthday (No. 12) (Korean) roommate's farewell party. (No. 26)
  9. Had summary checked and talked about it with her. (No. 13)
  10. Talked about Japan and its culture with an (American) roommate and her (American) friends. (No. 14)
  11. Talked about boyfriends with (American) roommate. (No. 13)
  12. Talked about snowboarding I first experienced yesterday with an (American) roommate. (No. 15)
  13. Talked about the music and its sound group with an (American) roommate. (No. 15)
  14. Talked about the population explosion in the world with an (American) roommate. (No. 23)
  15. Talked about the weak yen rate with a (Korean) roommate. (No. 26)
  16. Talked about why my photo and his of the same spot came out differently with a (Korean) roommate. (No. 26)
  17. Went to see a movie and talked about in with a (Korean) roommate. (No. 26)

#### 4. Conversation with a host family

If well-accepted, becoming a member of an American family provides the most natural way to learn spoken English. The Japanese students can learn English the same way American students acquired their mother tongue. Roommates' relationships are equal. But having a host family, the students can depend more on the host parents. Host parents play the role of tutors and parents as well as care givers.

More than assisting the students to learn spoken English, the host family introduces the Japanese students to real American culture. They may take them on their family vacation trip. They may introduce them to their friends and relatives on special occasions. In short, the Japanese students are allowed to experience "real" American life. This experience helps them not only to hone their English skills but also to learn social customs and manners which are difficult to learn from roommates.

But there are some unfavorable factors in the situation. Because of the generation gap and family preferences, the students may not be able to choose conversation topics they like and may have to listen to the same stories repeatedly. Usually home is a place of rest and relaxation. The host parents may not like to talk too long with the student. They would rather relax without being bothered. Usually they are working on weekdays and they are not available to talk with at home. The children of the host family may be willing to talk if things go well. But these

children often prefer socializing with American peers rather than Asian students because of cultural differences and the language handicap. Once the relationship deteriorates, staying with the host family can be a bed of nails. Some examples are as follows:

1. Checked on the grammar in my thesis with my host mother and discussed it. (No. 9)
2. Played and exchanged jokes with my host sister. (No. 9)
3. Talked with my host mother about a bad experience I had had during the day. (No. 18)
4. Talked about my writing with my host father and received good tips. (No. 18)
5. Talked about what I am going to do on Thanksgiving Day with my host family. Decided to have dinner with them. (No. 20)
6. Talked about the pot luck party we planned on Thanksgiving Day. (No. 20)
7. Talked about a bank statement with my host parents. (No. 20)
8. Talked with my host family about what had happened at school on the day. (No. 25)
9. Talked about prostitution with my host father and a roommate. (No. 25)
10. Asked my host family whether they eat pumpkin pie on Thanksgiving Day. (No. 26)

#### 5. Conversation with classmates and other friends and acquaintances

Many Americans here in Eugene, Oregon, criticize Japanese students for wanting to stay in the campus area and not socializing much with the people in town. Judging from the one-week diaries, Japanese students' circle of socialization is quite limited.

Except for them roommates, their friends are mostly classmates. Some students are engaged in volunteer activity and some take part in sports or recreational activities on campus. Some join friends' parties and get to know new friends. Only one student reported she is working part time at a coffee shop. (No log entry reported that a student made a friend through the Internet).

The informal situations with their classmates mostly consist of the breaks before and after class. During these short times, they ask their classmates about the difficult parts in the textbooks and lectures. This period is also used for greetings and to cultivate their relationships. For Japanese students, this is a very good chance to learn how to say "hello" and "good-bye" in different ways. All kinds of greeting patterns are used during those short times, which can be used in many other occasions during the day. They also learn how to conduct short conversations in a limited time.

In sports and volunteer activities, the topics are geared toward the ones related to the activity they are interested in—schedule setting, the contents of practice, the keys to making rapid progress, etc. They can absorb English technical terms used in each special activity.

Conversation among the waiters at a coffee shop might contain broader topics, including a lot of gossip. The Japanese girl working at a coffee shop (No.2) is probably experiencing what kind of topics Americans like to talk about to fill their time when they are free.

In each case, if they can get beyond formality and become friends, their relationship goes beyond campus and they share more time to talk about many more topics. Their relationship is just like that with a roommate. Some examples are as follows:

1. Pointed out the mistakes my classmate made in his homework and discussed them. Answered the student's question in my office hours. (No. 5)
2. Helped my friend with her homework. (No. 8)
3. Talked about the job with another volunteer from vocational training at a sauna. (No. 2)
4. Talked about many things with other sales clerks in a part-time job. (No. 2)
5. Talked about many things with two American friends' old roommate. (No. 6)
6. Talked about many things on the street with two American friends from my apartment house. (No. 6)
7. Talked about many things with my old roommate in my apartment. (No. 6)
8. Talked about many things with an American friend after class. (No. 7)
9. Talked about many things with an American friend on the street. (No. 7)
10. Talked about many things with a Singaporean friend in my apartment. (No. 7)
11. Talked about many things with a Singaporean friend and Indonesian friend in my apartment. (No. 7)
12. Talked about many things with a Korean friend on the street. (No. 9)
13. Talked about an upcoming test with an American friend and a Japanese friend over lunch. (No. 13)
14. Talked about an upcoming test with a Korean friend in the cafeteria. (No. 14)
15. Talked about an upcoming test with an American friend over breakfast. (No. 14)
16. Talked about an upcoming test with a Korean friend over lunch. (No. 14)
17. Talked about cultural difference between Japan and Korea with a Korean friend over lunch. (No. 14)
18. Talked about many things with an American friend in the cafeteria. (No. 15)
19. Talked about many things with a Japanese friend in English on campus. (No. 16)
20. Talked about many things with an American friend over brunch. (No. 17)
21. Talked about many things with a Yugoslavian friend and a Japanese friend over lunch. (No. 17)
22. Tutored a second grade American boy in Japanese. (No. 17)
23. Talked about many things with an American friend on campus. (No. 19)
24. Talked with a friend while making sushi rolls. (No. 20)

25. Helped a student find an apartment in Eugene. (No. 20)
26. Had lunch with a friend at the LCC cafeteria. (No. 20)
27. Had lunch with a co-worker from the office at the cafeteria. (No. 20)
28. Ate dinner with a friend at home. (No. 20)
29. Talked with a Korean friend and his tutor at a coffee shop. (No. 23)
30. Talked with four American friends and two Japanese friends having pizza. (No. 24)
31. Talked with a Canadian friend and a Japanese friend in the dormitory. (No. 24)
32. Talked with an old couple who spoke to me in the restaurant. We talked about Japan, since they had lived in Japan before. (No. 24)
33. Talked with an American couple over dinner. (No. 25)
34. Talked with an American friend on campus. Talked about the upcoming finals and winter break. (No. 25)
35. Talked about Shakespeare with a Yugoslavian student at her house. (No. 25)
36. Talked with an Asian classmate about the Asian economic crisis and my schedule about going back to Japan during New Year's. (No. 25)

#### 6. Conversation for negotiations

Whether they like it or not, Japanese students have contact with American society. They cannot avoid going through certain kinds of negotiations in order to start their student life.

On campus they must meet an academic adviser to decide which courses and how many credits they will take. Registration for classes comes next. At the office, they must pay tuition and buy their health insurance. They must also look for a place to live.

If you want to rent an apartment, negotiations with an apartment manager will be unavoidable. They need to open a bank account to receive money for school expenses from Japan. Without a car, life in America is almost impossible. If they want to buy a car, another negotiation is waiting.

Through all these negotiations, they add the vocabulary necessary for the negotiations. These situations, in a way, force them to speak English, which helps build their speech habits. Since some of these kinds of negotiations are repeated at certain intervals, the Japanese students take advantage of these opportunities to measure their progress in English. Some examples are as follows:

1. Received a money order from Japan (post office). (Most subjects)
2. Deposited it in my bank account (bank). (Most subjects)
3. Registered for classes and paid tuition (administration office). (Most subjects)
4. Bought health insurance sponsored by U of O (Health Center). (Most subjects)
5. Reported the loss of my credit card to the Public Safety Office (Public Safety Office). (No. 7)



6. Went through the procedures for registration (Admission Office). (No. 8)
7. Drove my car to the repair shop and asked them to fix it. (No. 9)
8. Took a driving test. (No. 9)
9. Went to get an international driver's license. (No. 18)
10. Arranged a reservation with Eugene County Ice. (No. 20)
11. Called the Chamber of Commerce to find if there are any activities on December 12. (No. 20)
12. Arranged a reservation with a pizza place for our dinner on December 12. (No. 20)
13. Phoned all the students coming to the party to remind them of bringing food and being on time. (No. 20)
14. Confirmed date of reservation. (No. 20)
15. Made an application for the TOEFL exam at the post office. (No. 23)
16. Called a rent-a-car company to rent a car. (No. 24)
17. Filled out a form at the rent-a-car company. (No. 24)
18. Called an American airline and confirmed a ticket. Also asked about a mileage card. (No. 25)

#### 7. Telephone conversation

Judging from the comments in the students' logs, telephone use is for rather advanced students. They can use it rather comfortably. Mid-level students use it only when they cannot avoid it. Lower-level students are scared when the telephone rings. Their logs tell us that the telephone is mostly used for business purposes (making appointments, ordering delivery service, etc) or talking about personal matters with friends. The use of cellular phone is not reported.

The data suggest that a few students use the phone quite often, while others never resort to the telephone. They use it only minimally. As mentioned above, telephone use is closely related to their level of English skills. But more than that, it also depends on their lifestyle. For a few advanced students, the telephone is a good diversion when they are bored. They can stay in their room and talk in English. But some advanced students are more active. They like to meet people directly and to have heart-to-heart talks beyond the limit of a phone conversation.

For the lower-level students, telephone conversation can be helpful in a certain way. In general, they shy away from speaking English especially in public, because they know their English sounds awkward. Telephone conversation offers them a perfect situation to speak without being worried about public stares. Some examples are as follows:

1. Talked with my Korean friend's family over the phone. (No. 2)
2. Talked with an American friend over the phone. (No. 6)
3. Talked with an Indo-Chinese friend over the phone. (No. 7)

4. Talked with a Singaporean friend over the phone. (No. 7)
5. Talked with an American friend over the phone. (No. 7)
6. Received a telephone call from a friend (spoke in English). (No. 8)
7. Talked with a friend over the phone (English). (No. 10)
8. Talked with an acquaintance over the phone (English). (No. 10)
9. Talked with a friend over the phone (English). (No. 13)
10. Arranged a reservation with Eugene County Ice. (No. 20)
11. Call the Chamber of Commerce to find out if there are any activities there. (No. 20)
12. Arranged a reservation with a pizza place for our dinner on December 12. (No. 20)
13. Confirmed the date of a reservation. (No. 20)
14. Called all the members coming to the party to remind them to bring food and be on time. (No. 20)
15. Called an American airline to confirm a reservation and asked about a mileage card. (No. 25)

#### (b) Conversation with many people

In this situation, the Japanese students learn more about American social functions than language skills. Especially in a formal meeting, be it an official public meetings or a family party, there are certain formalities to be observed. The students have to know when to take their turn speaking and when to stop. Some topics and conduct that are tolerated in casual situations are prohibited in formal settings. Being overwhelmed by the atmosphere, the students cannot properly join the occasion, even if their English skills are good enough. One advanced student (No. 8) actually insisted that public speech and conduct should be taught in English class in Japan.

In a more relaxed, casual situation, students can take part in the conversation on the condition they can follow it. To the lower-level students, this situation is torturous, because unlike person-to-person conversation, they have to pay careful attention to what many people are saying and become exhausted without uttering a word. This is the reason some students end up avoiding joining meetings. Even if they attend the meetings, the Japanese students tend to form their own group and talk among themselves.

#### 1. Group Project Meeting

The best aspect of this conversational situation is that all the participants share the same interest. Consequently, all of them are engaged in the conversation very actively. If the topics are exciting, the Japanese students forget their shyness and begin to talk before they know they are talking. Their attention span even lasts long after they feel tired of listening.

This kind of meeting also guides the participants to their real interests within their academic study. By listening to many different opinions on a topic, curiosity about what is supposed to be the right answer arises and stimulates the students' intellectual interests.

Some group project activities help enhance their business skills. Two of my subjects are applying for special permission to extend their stay one more year to experience a real job environment in America. They realize that their English skills remain limited to "campus English" and leave room to be improved to handle business matters in the real world. If their group project requires contact with any organizations on and off campus, that will help students to develop their social (vocational) skills. Some examples are as follows:

1. Group meeting for marketing project with 4 Americans. (No. 6)
2. Club meeting with 9 Americans. (No. 7)
3. Group meeting for project. Met and talked with City Hall officials 5 times a week. (No. 8)
4. Group meeting for the preparation for presentations in biology class. (No. 18)

### 2. Part-time Job

A part-time job usually teaches Japanese students how limited their English skills are. To set up a comfortable living condition, they are inclined to form their own community and create the special English that allows them to communicate easily. This kind of English is far removed from the real American English required for a part-time-job experience. They are shocked. They face another challenge. They will have contact with many American customers and have to serve them in English. They must acquire English skills that allow them to communicate with native speakers.

They also might notice that they must learn a lot about the nature of their job. If their job is selling a certain kind of merchandise, they must know a lot about the merits and defects of their commodity and be able to compare theirs with other makers' products. They must also be aware of the propensity of consumers. One student (No. 17) got a job teaching Japanese to an American child. She told me remorsefully that she realized how ignorant she is about Japanese culture. Some examples are as follows:

1. Work at a coffee shop (espresso) twice a week as a waitress. (No. 2)
2. Tutor a second-grade American boy in Japanese. (No. 17)

### 3. Shopping (Shopping trips with only Japanese friends are excluded.)

Shopping has special meaning to the lower-level students. One of their strong desires is to get the confidence that they can live in America using English. One of the indicators is whether they can shop well. Some of them are very disappointed by the experience that a sales clerk brought them a different item from what they

thought they ordered. If they do not have any trouble doing shopping and can chat with a sales clerk, they feel more than happy and gain more confidence. None of the advanced students reported shopping in their logs. Shopping is a matter of course for them and nothing to talk about.

Going shopping means to the lower level students that they can see and touch all different kinds of merchandise. They may have learned almost all of the English names of these commodities in their textbook in Japanese, but “seeing is believing.” They can internalize all these English words up to the clerk’s explanation of the vocabulary that describes the quality of the merchandise. These expressions are useful in daily life when many people talk about things they would like to get. Some examples are as follows:

1. Shopping at a supermarket alone. (No. 6)
2. Going and taking a look at computers at a mall alone. (No. 8)
3. Going and buying a present alone. (No. 9)
4. Going and taking a look at a snowboard alone. Go and buy a snowboard alone. (No. 14)
5. Shopping with an American friend. (No. 15)
6. Going out for shopping with a Yugoslavian friend and a Japanese friend. (No. 17)
7. Going shopping for the ingredients of Sushi with my office friend. (No. 20)
8. Going shopping at a mall and supermarket alone. (No. 21)
9. Going shopping to buy a farewell gift with a Thai friend. (No. 23)
10. Going shopping alone. (No. 27)

4. Parties and Festivals (Parties and Festivals held only among Japanese with no English spoken are eliminated.)

Several different kinds of party are reported. I divide this category into two types—small parties and big ones. Festivals belong to the category of big parties.

During a small group party, conversation usually becomes lively, because people are gathering to enjoy conversation. In most cases they share the same interests or they know each other well. Naturally they can find topics easily and conversation continues smoothly. Relations with roommates and host family are ideal to give rise to conversation, but these relations often fall into the same old track and end up in silence.

The small group party reinvigorates routine relationships and stimulates a lot of conversation, which is helpful for Japanese students to develop their conversational skills.

At large formal parties, the Japanese students would learn how a formal party processes. Most students rarely attend this kind of party. If they have a chance to speak, self-introduction is the only part.

Japanese students are often invited to parties held by American friends on

weekends. These occasions provide them with opportunities for making not only American friends but also friends from other foreign countries. Many topics related to cultural differences are discussed. At this kind of party, the participants tend to form small groups (in most cases they are friends or friends' friends joining the party together) and carry on a conversation among themselves. Japanese students usually feel left out and just stay after exchanging only a few words of greeting. Usually loud music is playing and many American students are shouting and laughing. They are giving vent to their youthful energy over drinks. Not much conversation is going on. Some Japanese students are fascinated by the atmosphere and join the parties. To the students recently come to America, this is a unique cultural experience, but the students staying longer in America tend to avoid joining these parties because they think they are meaningless. At this kind of party, they experience American students' culture rather than conversation.

The culture oriented parties on Christmas, Halloween and Thanksgiving introduce American tradition to Japanese students. They may learn the historical traditions for why Americans celebrate these days. But in general, except Santa Claus and the children's costumes on Halloween and turkey dinner on Thanksgiving, these festive holidays are just like any other typical holiday. Most Japanese students are invited to their host family's house, their American friend's house, or their instructor's house. They enjoy watching TV, engaging in conversation over drinks, and playing games in a warm and relaxed atmosphere.

At parties before watching sports games, the students are excited and talk a lot about their anticipation of how the game will turn out. Japanese students can pick up a lot of useful expressions and learn how to talk about sports.

Local festivals such as the Lane County Fair, Eugene Celebration, Saturday Market, etc., provide the Japanese students with other opportunities for being immersed in American local culture. On these festival sites, the students often run into their friends and stand talking. This is another occasion where conversation occurs. Some examples are as follows:

1. Social Activities (Party). English. Mostly Asians with a few Americans, forty in total. (No. 1)
2. Party held by graduate students with physics major. English. Many participants. (No. 5)
3. Pre-party for football game. English. More than ten Americans at my old roommate's house. (No. 6)
4. Class reunion. English. One American, one Kazafustan, four Japanese, one Taiwanese, one Iranian. (No. 8)
5. House party. English. One Nepalese, one Korean, three Japanese.
6. Host mother's birthday party. English. Nine Americans, one Mexican, one

- Taiwanese, two Japanese. (No. 9)
7. Host father's birthday party. English. Four Americans, three Mexicans, one Taiwanese, two Japanese. (No. 9)
  8. Party. Four Americans, six Asians, seven Japanese. (No. 10)
  9. Halloween party sponsored by missionaries. English. Many people from different countries. (No. 12)
  10. Halloween and birthday party. English. Three Japanese, fifteen Americans. (No. 13)
  11. Halloween party. English. Twelve Koreans, five Americans, one Japanese at friend's apartment. (No. 14)
  12. Farewell party. English and Japanese. Thirteen Japanese, two Asians, four Americans, one Russian. (No. 17)
  13. Party. English and Japanese. Two Americans, two Japanese. (No. 17)
  14. International party. English. Many foreign students attended (Indonesians, Spanish, Mexicans, Japanese, etc) on LCC campus. (No. 20)
  15. AEI party. English. Some instructors and many foreign students. (No. 23)

#### 5. Parties with Japanese friends

Many students think this kind of party will hinder their language learning, but they still think it's "a necessary evil" or "a safety device."

They are living in America using a second language. They fall into a state of frustration, since they feel they cannot communicate as spontaneously as they can in their mother tongue. They disperse this frustration by talking with their Japanese friends as much as they like.

In school and private life, they encounter many unique experiences they want to talk about. In most cases, they do not share these experiences with American students. To them they are nothing unique. Only the Japanese students can share their excitement. Probably the most important role of parties with other Japanese is trouble shooting, besides free use of Japanese. One student (No. 6) reported that "when I have trouble, I directly go to my Japanese friends, not to American friends or a counselor." Usually the nature of their problems are the same and are easily shared and discussed. Some American students are too independent to share this kind of personal problem. They think the Japanese students should decide for themselves and shrug them off.

It seems reasonable to assume that the students recently come to America tend to depend upon this kind of party, thinking of their language problem and culture shock. But many advanced students also like to attend the parties. Their feelings might be similar to the ones experienced by naturalized Japanese Americans who miss their native Japanese.

This kind of meeting is held more often than we think. One student (No. 2)

said, "I wish I could go to a place where there are no Japanese students." She tries to avoid parties but she cannot resist them.

#### 6. Watching and playing sports and enjoying hobbies

Getting involved in sports deeply familiarizes Japanese students with many expressions, because these expressions are uttered on the scene at the moment the play is made. By watching a football game, the Japanese students pick up all kinds of slang (words often used in daily conversation) as well as technical terms for football. Some examples are as follows:

1. Go to the health club and take a sauna bath. (No. 2)
2. Watch the UO football game. (Nos. 6, 9, 24)
3. Take part in a volleyball tournament. Two Ecuadorians, four Japanese, Americans, Koreans, Malaysians, Taiwanese, Chileans, Nepalese. (No. 8)
4. Lecture and practice scuba diving. (No. 9)
5. Work out and play basketball games (pick-up games) at YMCA (twice a week). (No. 20)
6. Browse through books at the bookstore. (No. 26)

#### 7. Group activities (Socializing in a group)

People easily run out of conversation topics when they are in the same place for a long time. But the group activities reported by my subjects suggest they could maintain conversation longer and more easily, because it is easier to find good topics if people are sharing and enjoying the same atmosphere. Someone in the group brings up a good topic and others follow. Group meetings are usually held in a public place. New situations surround them and stimulate them to talk. Take a group trip for example: In the car on the way, as the sights outside change one after another, they could also find the varying topics. Some examples are as follows:

1. Visiting Portland with two Taiwanese and three Japanese. (No. 8)
2. Church worship and college Sunday school. (No. 18)
3. Work at the International Students Community Program Office. Make posters and the flyers for the party. (No. 20)

## **(2) Listening**

Without developing proper listening ability, Japanese students cannot live confidently in America. They must feel uneasy when spoken to and have to be apologetic when they have to ask to repeat a question.

### 1. Watching TV and videos. Watching movies.

TV is the main source of listening practice. The students in the dormitory do not have easy access to TV and do not watch it often, although there is a big TV set in the students' recreation room.

To state it plainly, TV is a miniature American society. One can get any type of

information from it. In terms of language, TV offers vocabulary necessary for daily life. In terms of content, it offers everything from high-level educational and cultural programs to sports and entertainment. Japanese students can choose any program based on their needs and interests. Without watching TV, it is difficult to provide a good conversation topic and make conversation. Thus, TV is the quickest way to absorb American common culture. From the practice listening point of view, TV is ideal since it introduces all varieties of speech level, news, singing, children's speech, etc. One can listen to the sounds with the pictures on the screen, which helps one understand the meaning of the sounds. Since one is enjoying the program while listening, one is not easily bored. No wonder many students depend upon TV for listening practice. Some students are using TV more actively. They try to repeat aloud what the TV speaker says. One student likes to sing songs together with the children on the children's program. For listening practice, watching videos and movies at the theaters has the same effect.

1. Watch TV news. (Nos. 1, 6, 9)
2. Watch a video movie twice a week. (Nos. 1, 2, 7, 16)
3. Watch TV. (Nos. 20, 21, 23)
4. Watch TV drama. (Nos. 6, 7, 9, 10, 14, 17, 18, 20)
5. Watch TV talk show. (No. 9)
6. Watch TV comics. (No. 14)
7. Watch TV sports program. (No. 24)
8. Go and see a movie. (No. 26)

### 2. Listening to the radio

Listening to the radio sounds out of date, but some students are still listening to it—in most cases in the car while driving. Unlike TV, no visual aids are available to the listener. Thus, the students can evaluate their true listening ability.

1. Radio in car. (music) (No. 1)
2. Radio music, etc. (No. 9)

### 3. Auditing lectures

Some students are interested in listening to lectures given by famous speakers. Some others like to audit classes because of the professors' good reputation. Some simply attend to fill time while they wait for a friend taking the class. Through lectures, students can experience how an instructional speech is presented. Some examples are as follows:

1. "How computer systems work" (No. 10)
2. "History of 'Western Review'" (No. 15, 24)

### 4. Listening practice in the language laboratory (AEI only)

To simplify Japanese students' trouble, most of them know enough English words to conduct daily conversation, but they cannot converse well, simply because most of



them do not understand how native speakers are talking. Some words are contracted, swallowed, and even omitted. They all realize that getting over the difficulty of the sound system is essential. For this purpose, the language laboratory where one can practice all English sounds systematically should be the ideal place to practice. But surprisingly enough, not many AEI students are utilizing the language laboratory. In the language laboratory, they can practice sounds unfamiliar to them. But the problem is that all the sounds they practiced suddenly disappear when they speak in a daily situation. In other words, they are not sure they are pronouncing the word properly in conversation. In this sense, they feel that the practice in the language lab might be useful but the result is unpredictable. They also do not like the atmosphere of the language lab. They feel isolated. Moreover, they already use it often in regular classes.

But there is another reason students do not use the language lab. They believe they can get over the sound problem by actively joining conversations with native speakers. By watching TV they can learn the sound system more comfortably in a more comfortable situation. In this natural way, in fact, many students, especially younger students, (Japanese high school graduates) overcome this problem in a rather short time. But older students (Japanese college graduates or older students) take longer to get over the difficulties. In my observation, some students are not talented enough to pick up sounds in this way. They definitely need the help of the language lab. But unfortunately, they think they have acquired the sound system and go on their way with a heavy accent.

### (3) Reading

In the case of Japanese students, reading is roughly divided into two categories: (1) reading textbooks for classes and (2) reading for entertainment and knowledge based on their own interests. E-mail reading falls into the second category.

When students read textbooks for preparation, they try to read very carefully to understand the contents for classes. But especially at the college level, reading requirements are set based on American students' reading speed, and this speed exceeds Japanese students' reading ability. This pressure helps the Japanese students develop their own reading skills—what part they should read carefully and what part they can skim or even skip. Repetition of this reading practice finally leads them to creating real solid reading ability.

When students read for their own interests, they do not feel the pressure they feel in reading textbooks. The books whose content attracts them keeps them involved in reading. Nobody blames them if they skip some part to get to know the conclusion. They are allowed to skip uninteresting portions. This habit of reading helps get out of the habit of reading word for word. They had fostered this habit of

slow reading through Japanese English education. They can develop the natural reading habit without being aware that they are reading.

The aspects of reading that contribute to Japanese student's conversational English are (1) increase in vocabulary and (2) finding good topics for conversation (especially from magazines). A student (No. 9) reported that while reading, she takes down the expressions she is impressed by and tries to use them in her conversation. Another student (No. 12) reported she makes it a rule to read parts of her textbook aloud. She wished she could pronounce words so clearly when she is actually speaking.

The following data show the students are struggling to read textbooks and have not much time to spare to read books for their own interest.

Reported times (per week) of reading textbooks by 23 subjects = 84 times.

Reported times (per week) of reading for their interests by 23 subjects = 22 times.

The reading materials of Japanese students mostly consist of textbooks.

#### (4) Writing

Both speaking and writing express our feelings and ideas. If there is any difference between these activities, speaking is spontaneous whereas writing allows a certain amount of time to think about topics and how to express them. This extra time for thought allows us to express more complicated feelings and ideas which are rather difficult to express spontaneously. In order to express these feelings and ideas logically, we use "conversation" and "lecture" orally and "writing" as text.

In the case of Japanese students, writing is divided into two categories— (1) private writing (e-mail, letters) and (2) academic writing (school papers). In the category of writing for personal purposes, writing e-mail messages is reported most frequently. It is casual writing closest to daily conversation. Some educators are critical, saying that e-mail encourages students to write too colloquially and ungrammatically. But while writing e-mail, students feel comfortable and can express their ideas freely.

According to the subjects' logs, 8 students out of 23 send e-mail. (Nos. 2, 7, 9, 10, 16, 20, 24, 27). Student No. 7 works on it 5 times and No. 10 7 times a week. The rest of them use it once a week. Their e-mails are all addressed to their friends with one exception to the tutor. The countries to which they send e-mails include India and Germany besides states in America.

The second type of private writing is writing letters and keeping diaries. Only two cases (Nos. 10 and 20) are reported, since e-mail and telephone mainly replace this activity.

Most of the students' writing consists of academic papers. Academic writing can

be divided into two types: (1) skill-oriented writing and (2) idea-oriented writing. The typical examples of (1) are “business writing” and “newspaper writing.” Writing business letters is reported by Nos. 6, 14, 16, and 17. No. 14 is taking one journalism course. Since LCC is a vocational college, many Japanese students there are taking business writing. The total times they wrote business papers is 5 times per week.

The idea oriented papers are mostly essays and journals on special topics for their coursework. Some examples are as follows: an essay on violence and the media, comments on a textbook, draft for a presentation on the different sense of values between the U.S. and Japan, etc. The number of times each participant reported writing this kind of paper is as follows:

Zero a week (Nos. 1, 24)

Once a week (Nos. 2, 6, 16, 20, 23, 26)

Twice a week (Nos. 14, 17)

Three times a week (Nos. 7, 12)

Four times a week (Nos. 8, 21, 27)

Five times a week (Nos. 25)

The total number of times is 33.

Their writing favors academic papers, considering that e-mail is in most cases just a short note.

Since Japanese students deal with topics in an American setting, their cultural experience gives them new insights. The students can discuss matters based on cultural differences. Writing about these topics in English also requires the Japanese students to use American logic. This broadens their horizons. One subject (No. 25) mentioned she prefers writing to talking because it is more meaningful than chatting. She feels more comfortable expressing anything in English because to her, English logic is so precise and comfortable for describing anything.

For the progress of the students’ conversational skill, writing is very helpful. Basically both conversation and writing are activities for expressing oneself. They reciprocate each other. Since higher-level vocabulary is used in writing, these expressions are solidified and applied daily. Writing also helps the students manage the content of higher-level conversation.

Above, I have discussed all the situations without classifying the subjects’ language levels. However, we might ask whether or not, in each category of “Listening and speaking,” “Listening,” “Reading,” and “Writing,” students language activities differ based on their language ability. To partly answer this question, I frame a hypothesis: The advanced students spend more time speaking, listening, reading, and writing than the lower level students, because the advanced students have less resistance to using English and can maintain in each activity longer. One

subject is rated “bilingual” by Mr. Amon, the evaluator of the subjects’ English ability. The time spent in the four areas by this student exceeded that of the other students. His data reported for these categories led me to this hypothesis. The comparison of the data in four language skills among the advanced (UO), intermediate (LCC) and lower level (AEI) students may confirm my hypothesis. The following are the data for comparison:

UO students:

Listening and speaking: 20 hrs 36 min (per week)

Listening: 7 hrs.

Reading: 12 hrs. 44 min.

Writing: 4 hrs. 39 min.

LCC students

Listening and speaking: 12 hrs 48 min (per week)

Listening: 5 hrs. 12 min.

Reading: 9 hrs. 6 min

Writing: 7 hrs. 7 min

AEI students:

Listening and speaking: 11 hrs 8 min (per week)

Listening: 1 hr 47 min

Reading: 13 hrs 18 min

Writing: 4 hrs.

In informal situations, listening and speaking are synonymous with “socializing” and “relaxation”. In this category, UO students dominate the other students. They finally clear the language barrier and speak English rather comfortably. LCC students are doing better than AEI students, but still remain close to the AEI students’ level. AEI students are on the way to gaining enough ability to communicate. Both LCC and AEI students might still be uncomfortable in daily communication.

The listening category is simplified by watching TV. Both UO students and LCC students watch TV and listen to the radio. Two hours difference per week may suggest UO students watch and listen with better understanding than LCC students. AEI students rarely watch TV. This is explained by the housing situation. Most of them have come from Japan recently and are living in the dorm. They do not have easy access to TV. Their language ability also hinders them from watching TV. Without much understanding, they lose interest even if the pictures on the screen assist them.

In the reading category, AEI students read the most. Since AEI is a language school, students are assigned a lot of reading homework. Their reading materials are almost always textbooks. AEI students often complain that because of too many reading assignments they do not have enough time to meet people and practice

conversation. Their poor reading skills prolong the time they have to spend on reading. One student (No. 21) complained that she had to spend 27 hours (per week) on reading assignments. The UO students spend more time reading than LCC students. The data shows that the reading of UO students is geared to school work while LCC students have more time for reading for pleasure. This suggests that UO students are under more academic pressure.

LCC students exceed the other students in time spent writing. My data show that the ratio of private writing does not differ much among the students. LCC shows more hours than the other two in academic writing. Since LCC is a vocational college, many students are taking business correspondence courses. There are some other vocational courses that assign a lot of writing requirements. This increases the number of hours LCC students spend on academic writing.

Based on the above observations, the hypothesis that advanced students spend more time on the four language categories is not so evident. In each category, the schools differ in time spent. But one thing is quite clear. Advanced students (UO students) are socializing more and speaking English more than LCC and AEI students. They enjoy watching TV and listening to the radio more, because they can understand them better.

As for reading and writing, no significant difference could be found except in the writing category for LCC students. Their increased use of time on writing is explained above.

## Reference Data No. 1

## 1. UO students

Per week		Category	No. 5	No. 6	No. 7	No. 8	No. 9
Speaking and Listening	Conversation with one or few people	Conversation with an instructor	3 hrs 30 min		15 min	2 hrs	
		Conversation with a tutor					
		Conversation with a roommate					
		Conversation with a host family	1 hr 20 min	9 hrs 30 min	9 hrs 30 min	7 hrs	2 hrs 40 min
		Conversation for negotiations			2 hrs	1 hr	1 hr
		Conversation with classmates & friends					
	Conversation with many people	Telephone conversation		20 min	2 hrs 45 min	1 hr 30 min	
		Group project meeting		3 hrs	1 hr	7 hrs	
		Part-time job					
		Shopping		1 hr		3 hrs	1 hr 10 min
		Parties & festivals	3 hrs	3 hrs		7 hrs 30 min	8 hrs
Watching & playing sports & enjoying hobbies			3 hrs		7 hrs	4 hrs	
Group activities					7 hrs		
Listening	Watching TV & videos		3 hrs 30 min	16 hrs 30 min		12 hrs	
	Listening to the radio					3 hrs	
	Auditing lectures						
	Listening practice						
Reading	Reading textbooks	18 hrs	11 hrs	5 hrs	11 hrs	14 hrs 30 min	
	Reading for pleasure					1 hr	
	Reading e-mail		10 min	30 min		2 hrs	
Writing	Writing school papers		4 hrs	1 hr	7 hrs		
	Writing letters, diaries, etc.						
	Sending e-mail			3 hrs 15 min		3 hrs	
	Computer operation	5 hrs					

## Reference Data No. 2

## 2. LCC students

Per week	Category	No. 1	No. 2	No. 10	No. 16	No. 17	No. 18	No. 19	No. 20	No. 25	
Speaking and	Conversation with one or few people	Conversation with an instructor and a tutor		1 hr	20 min			1 hr		9 hr	1 hr 30 min
		Conversation with a roommate, host family, classmates, and other friends	2 hrs 10 min	3 hrs	14 hrs	3 hrs	2 hrs 30 min	2 hrs 40 min	4 hrs	5 hrs 30 min	6 hrs 30 min
		Conversation for negotiations						1 hr 30 min		1 hr	
		Telephone conversation			10 min			10 min	30 min	30 min	30 min
		Group project meeting						2 hrs			
Listening	Conversation in groups	Part-time job		4 hrs		1 hr 30 min					
		Shopping					2 hrs		5 hrs		
		Parties & festivals	5 hrs		5 hrs		6 hrs		2 hrs	5 hrs	
		Watching & playing sports & enjoying hobbies		40 min						6 hrs	
		Group activities (group trips, etc.)						2 hrs		8 hrs 30 min	
		Watching TV & videos	3 hrs	5 hrs 30 min		4 hrs		6 hrs	1 hr	6 hrs	
Listening	Listening to the radio										
	Auditing lectures			4 hrs							
	Listening practice at language lab										
	Reading textbooks	12 hrs	7 hrs		12 hrs	8 hrs	10 hrs	5 hrs	6 hrs	10 hrs	
Reading	Reading for pleasure	1 hr	2 hrs				1 hr				
	Reading e-mail				3 hrs		1 hr				
	Writing school papers		1 hr		2 hrs 30 min	12 hrs	9 hrs	4 hrs	2 hrs	23 hrs	
Writing	Writing letters, diaries, etc.			15 min					1 hr 30 min		
	Sending e-mail		1 hr		1 hr				1 hr		
	Computer operation						1 hr				

## Reference Data No. 3

## 3. AEI students

Per week	Category	No. 12	No. 13	No. 14	No. 15	No. 17	No. 21	No. 23	No. 24	No. 27		
Speaking and Listening	Conversation with one or few people	Conversation with an instructor and a tutor	2 hrs	1 hr	1 hr	15 min	2 hrs	20 min	1 hr		2 hrs 30 min	
		Conversation with a roommate, host family, classmates, and other friends	4 hrs 20 min	17 hrs	6 hrs 30 min	7 hrs	30 min	2 hrs 30 min	3 hrs	4 hrs 50 min		
		Conversation for negotiations						40 min	1 hr		20 min	
		Telephone conversation		9 min					30 min			
	Listening	Conversation in groups	Group project meeting									
			Part-time job									
			Shopping			4 hrs	2 hrs	5 hrs	2 hrs 30 min			3 hrs
			Parties & festivals	5 hrs	6 hrs	5 hrs			2 hrs			
			Watching & playing sports & enjoying hobbies							5 hrs	3 hrs	
			Group activities (group trips, etc.)									
Listening	Watching TV & videos					6 hrs	3 hrs 30 min	2 hrs 30 min	2 hrs			
	Listening to the radio											
	Auditing lectures											
	Listening practice at language lab				1 hr			1 hr				
Reading	Reading textbooks	24 hrs 10 min	5 hrs	20 hrs	13 hrs 30 min	27 hrs	11 hrs	5 hrs	2 hrs	9 hrs		
	Reading for pleasure								3 hrs			
	Reading e-mail											
Writing	Writing school papers	5 hrs 20 min		6 hrs 30 min		6 hrs	3 hrs		4 hrs	5 hrs		
	Writing letters, diaries, etc.											
	Sending e-mail							1 hr		30 min		
	Computer operation			2 hrs		1 hr				2 hrs		



## II Case Study

The above data show generally how students are learning English. But they are not sufficient to describe the learning strategies unique to each student. Just as everyone possesses a different personality, every student has his or her own learning style. There are no easy generalizations. To make up for this diversity, a case study is indispensable.

Their personalities and purposes for studying abroad decide their approach to learning English. They also heavily influence their lifestyle in America. However, some certain learning patterns emerge. In order to reach their goals, Japanese students apply many strategies but they converge on certain types of learning styles. The subjects' personality types are divided into three groups and discussed based on their learning styles.

### (1) The type who enjoys studying abroad

These students are divided into two groups. The first group comes to America to experience and enjoy American life and broaden their horizons. They are going to school to keep their legal student status allowing them to stay in America. But they do not have much academic ambition. The second type has difficulty adjusting to Japanese society for some reason and comes to America expecting that their problems may be solved. These students need some time to find the answers to their problems. The numbers of this type of student is increasing.

#### Student No. 1 (LCC student).

This student mostly socializes with Japanese friends. He attends class constantly. It is only in the college classes and college events that he meets foreign students. He watches TV but cannot understand the programs very well. He listens to music on the car radio. He can sometimes understand the lyrics and feels happy. He enjoys shopping and traveling. He feels happy when he can talk with a sales clerk. His study of English is mostly reading textbooks and writing assigned papers. His motto is, "Don't push yourself too hard. If I can talk about basic matters, that's fine with me."

Conversation with one or a few people: 2 hrs 10 min (per week)

Conversation in groups: 5 hrs

Watching TV or listening to the radio: 3 hrs

Reading: 13 hrs

Writing: 0 hrs

#### Student No. 4. (UO student).

This student is the escapist type. He came to America to be transferred to a senior high school here. He hated rigid Japanese society, especially the knowledge-oriented difficult college entrance examinations. He graduated from an American

high school and entered the UO. Unfortunately he did not like American students, either. From his point of view, American students are superficial and too conceited. They look down on him when he cannot properly explain something in English. They do not want to let him participate in their group activities. He feels left out. As a result, he only socializes with Japanese students. On campus he speaks English in class but does not socialize often with American students. He stays away from American society and shuts himself in his room. Naturally, he tries to learn English mostly from books and TV. (His log is not presented.)

(2) The English language skill oriented type

The main purpose of this type is to acquire language skills. These students strongly believe that their language skill promises good job opportunities and a happy life in Japan or America in the future.

Student No. 7. (UO student).

This student has already acquired sufficient fluency in conducting daily conversation. She seems to have reached a level where she can work on polishing her speech. To her it is a waste of time to meet people and talk. She prefers to watch TV programs that suit her purposes and pick up more technical and refined words and expressions. There is no time to look up these words in the dictionary while watching. Her strategy is to watch TV with her roommate (if available) and ask whatever questions she has instantly. Thus, she can develop her conversation skills sitting on a sofa in her room.

Conversation with one or few people: 14 hrs 30 min (per week)

Conversation in groups: 0 hr

Watching TV or listening to the radio: 16 hrs 30 min

Reading: 5 hrs 30 min

Writing: 4 hrs 15 min

Student No. 8. (UO student).

This student always has a clear sense of purpose for doing something and studying hard. She is determined to improve her speaking ability. She feels difficulty getting involved in group conversations held by Americans. She feels happy when she can speak out in class discussion. Her interest is ethnic studies. She makes full use of her interest to develop her conversational skills. She takes every chance to discuss cultural differences with not only Americans but many students from different countries (mostly Asians). In this way she extends her circle of friendship and socializing and talks with friends as often as possible. She does not have a TV set because she does not have much time to watch it.

Conversation with one or few people: 11 hrs 30 min

Conversation in groups: 31 hrs 30 min

Watching TV or listening to the radio: 0 hr

Reading: 11 hrs

Writing: 7 hrs

Student No. 10. (just graduated from LCC).

This student has Singaporean boyfriend and they live together. He extends her circle of friends. He introduces her to many friends and sometimes takes her to his classes. Thus, she has a lot of opportunities to use English. In their private life, they talk about many things happening daily and talk about the programs on TV. One of their favorite topics is recipes when they try to cook all varieties of ethnic food. She is immersing herself in American culture by settling in there.

Conversation with one or few friends: 14 hrs 30 min

Conversation in groups: 5 hrs

Watching TV or listening to the radio: 4 hrs

Reading: 0 hr

Writing: 15 min (e-mail)

Student No. 13. (AEI student).

Since she is living in the dormitory, this student walks around the floor and goes into any room where conversation is going on. She tries to cut in, even if she does not understand what other people are talking about. When she is left out of the group, she feels mortified and vows that next time she will do better. She often forgets to do homework, because she is always running around to someone's room and talking. At lunch time she goes to the cafeteria and tries to sit next to a group of American students and listen to their conversation. If possible, she joins the conversation. She often feels left out but she does not want to give up. She thinks she is talking a lot and making rapid progress.

Conversation with one or few friends: 18 hrs 9 min

Conversation in groups: 5 hrs

Watching TV or listening to the radio: 0 hr (no TV set)

Reading: 5 hrs

Writing: 0 hr

Student No. 14. (AEI student).

During her fourth to sixth grade, this student lived in Malaysia. Although she went to a Japanese school there, there were some English classes in which she played many word games. She believes she acquired the perfect pronunciation system through these classes. When she answers the phone for her American roommate, the other party thinks she is an American. She can understand an animated cartoon perfectly. Since she has acquired English pronunciation very well, she believes she will be able to speak English fluently in the near future. She does not make any special effort to look for opportunities to speak English. She feels vocabulary building is more crucial. Now she is reading and writing a lot.

Conversation with one or few friends: 7 hrs 30 min

Conversation in groups: 9 hrs

Watching TV or listening to the radio: 0 hr (no TV set)

Reading: 20 hrs

Writing: 8 hrs 30 min

### (3) The academic-oriented type

There are a few academic types whose concern is only their academic field. They do not care much about their language skills as long as their lack of skill does not interfere with their academic work.

But most of the academic types have two goals. They want to get a degree in an American college, because they think their diploma will enhance their job opportunities in Japan. But they are also well aware that their future employers will expect good language skills. Naturally, they make every effort to acquire proper language skills that live up to future employers' expectations.

#### Student No. 5. (UO student accepted into graduate school).

Before coming to the US, this student went to an English language school in Japan for a year so that he can concentrate on his study of physics in America. His concern is exclusively how to solve problems in physics. Unfortunately for him, his command in his discipline is so good many other students ask his help. He has to speak English. He said his use of English is mostly limited to campus. In the laboratory he stays late and does experiments with his professors and graduate students. During that period, he exchanges ideas with his friends. That is the only time he speaks English. His socialization is limited to physics major students and to seniors only. He speaks English when he has to.

Conversation with one or a few friends: 4 hrs 50 min

Conversation in groups: 3 hrs

Watching TV or listening to the radio: 0 hr

Reading: 18 hrs

Writing: 5 hrs

#### Student No. 6. (UO student).

This student is trying to keep a good balance between academic study and conversational skills. He gives a higher priority to academics. He believes his degree will be crucial for finding a good job in Japan. But he also realizes that English conversational skills will help his career very much. Since it is very difficult to develop these skills in Japan, he wants to get as much fluency as possible while he is staying here. When he has free time, he tries to meet American classmates as often as possible. He tries to avoid Japanese company because it usually takes him a while to get back into English. News programs on TV are still difficult to understand without the help of closed captions. Getting involved in class discussion is also

difficult. He can conduct everyday conversation rather smoothly. He is generally satisfied with his progress in the past two years, although much more remains to be achieved.

Conversation with one or a few friends: 9 hrs 50 min

Conversation in groups: 10 hrs

Watching TV or listening to the radio: 3 hrs 30 min

Reading: 11 hrs 10 min

Writing: 4 hrs

Student No. 20. (LCC student).

In Japan, this student went to the International High School in Fukuoka. Before that, he went to elementary school in Turkey. All the classes were taught in English. He is bilingual. But his Japanese is not good enough to pass the difficult college entrance examination in Japan. He has to come to America to study. He has his heart set on becoming an architect and plans to transfer to the architecture department of the UO. At LCC he is an organizer of the International Students' Community program and makes a lot of plans for the students. Through these activities, he has many discussions with his committee members. If needed, he negotiates with the office staff in charge of student affairs and makes phone calls to the Chamber of Commerce to support their projects. To welcome new students, he runs around town with his friends to buy all kinds of ingredients for "sushi." At home, he discussed a bank statement he could not follow with his host father. He works out once a week at the YMCA gymnasium. His activities are varied. He is just like an American student. He said he still tries to speak to native speakers and read a lot of books. He tries to do the best in his school work, which he believes will help improve his English.

Conversation with one or a few friends: 16 hrs

Conversation in groups: 24 hrs 30 min

Watching TV or listening to the radio: 6 hrs

Reading: 6 hrs

Writing: 4 hrs 30 min

Student No. 21. (AEI student).

This student takes schoolwork seriously. She puts all the time into it. She shows the typical frustrations of the students who have recently come to America. She cannot understand well what the instructors are saying and cannot speak as she wishes. The homework is too much of a burden on her and she has to stay in the library reading all the time. Because of this burden, she does not have time to socialize and speak English. She wonders if the fact that there are too many Japanese and Asian students in her classes is causing her slow progress. She wants to socialize with many native speakers. She is unhappy that her roommate in the

dorm was a Korean for the first 4 months and is now a Japanese. She wants to move out of the dormitory.

Conversation with one or a few friends: 2 hrs 30 min

Conversation in groups: 5 hrs

Watching TV or listening to the radio: 6 hrs

Reading: 27 hrs

Writing: 7 hrs

Each student has his or her own learning patterns. I analyzed them and classified them into three patterns. The question arises whether their different learning patterns cause the differences in the time they reported they used for learning the four categories. I divided the 23 subjects into three groups, referring to their journals and logs and my impressions of them in our interviews. The results are as follows:

1. The life-oriented type

Nos. 1, 16, 17, 23 (per personal average)

Listening and speaking: 7 hrs 25 min

Listening: 3 hrs 37 min

Reading: 11 hrs 45 min

Writing: 4 hrs 38 min

2. The English skill-oriented type

Nos. 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19 (per personal average)

Listening and speaking: 16 hrs 40 min

Listening: 4 hrs 58 min

Reading: 11 hrs 9 min

Writing: 4 hrs 39 min

3. The academic-oriented type (per personal average)

Nos. 5, 6, 18, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26

Listening and speaking: 13 hrs 36 min

Listening: 3 hrs

Reading: 11 hrs 31 min

Writing: 7 hrs 20 min

In the listening and speaking category, the life-oriented type reported far fewer hours than the other two types. The difference shows they do not socialize with other foreign students much and mostly socialize with other Japanese. Thinking of their lifestyles, this result is acceptable. They like to live a comfortable life here and do not like to place themselves in difficult situations, such as occasions where English is spoken.

The different amounts of time reported by the English skill-oriented type and the

academic-oriented type is also reasonable. The former willingly sacrifice their time to practice speaking skills while the latter try to keep a good balance between academics and speaking practice.

In the listening category, not much time difference is observed among the three types. The skill-oriented types want to expose themselves more to spoken English by watching TV even at home, which makes a slightly bigger time difference than between the other two types. There might be a possibility that the life-oriented types may relax and have more chances to watch TV. But this does not happen. Some of them said that they do not understand TV programs very well. They tend to watch only sports programs and sometimes cartoons.

The reading category shows almost the same amount of time spent on reading among the three different types. Their reading is totally geared to textbooks. They cannot spare much time for reading books and magazines of their own interest. Even the relaxing types have to read textbooks and prepare for their assignments.

In the writing category, the academic-oriented types exceed the other two types. They are very conscious about the quality of their papers and put much time into them by referencing many books. They are more interested in academic work. They also pay more attention to writing papers, because they know they play an important role in deciding their grades. The life-oriented types do as much as they can but do not care much about the results. The language skill-oriented types view papers as a bother and try to get them over with. Their foremost concern is socializing and sharpening their English skills.

When comparing the times spent on the four categories among the three institutions to those among the three different learning patters, an interesting fact emerges. Roughly speaking, the “listening and speaking” category means “socializing,” and “listening” category means “relaxing,” mostly watching TV or listening to music. Both of these categories show “the time spent personally.” The “reading” category, considering that students are mostly reading school books, is for academic work. The same reasoning can be applied to the “writing” category. Although students send e-mail to their friends, most of the time for writing is used to write papers for coursework. Thus, both of the categories can be roughly defined as “academic work.” Following are the numbers of hours spent for personal and academic purposes (based on students’ reported logs (per week) (per person):

	Personal use	Academic use
UO students	27 hrs 36 min	17 hrs 23 min
LCC students	18 hrs 0 min	16 hrs 13 min
AEI students	12 hrs 55 min	17 hrs 18 min
Life-oriented students	11 hrs 2 min	16 hrs 23 min
Language skill oriented students	21 hrs 38 min	15 hrs 48 min

Academic oriented students                      16 hrs 36 min                      18 hrs 51 min

In the first grouping there are very narrow differences found for academic work among UO, LCC and AEI. Since the subjects belong to any of the institutions as students, it is natural that they need to spend almost the same time doing their preparations and assignments. It would be rather surprising to see differences in time in the second grouping. Academic-oriented students spend more time for reading and writing than the other two groups. But I am surprised to find that the time spent for academic work by the two other groups was not far less than the academic-oriented students. Whatever lifestyle they assume, they are students and they are properly doing school work. Even the life-oriented students spend almost as many hours as the academic-oriented students. In general, we can say that they are using almost the same amount of time for study.

On the contrary, big discrepancies can be seen in the category of “the time for their own use.” In the first group, UO students dominate this category. This is mainly because they have better language skills and can communicate with others easily. They are enjoying their stay in America more. In the second group, it is natural that the language skill-oriented students exceed the other two groups. This is simply because they are highly motivated to socialize to learn conversational English.

Even if there is a degree of difference in the students, all of them wish to acquire listening and speaking abilities that can be comfortably developed in the countries where the language is spoken. As for the reading and writing ability, they can be acquired even if the students stay in Japan. At the language skill levels of the Japanese students studying abroad, how well they can listen to and speak English is closely related to how long they can stay and practice English in social situations and how long they are exposed to English sounds from TV or radio. In this category, UO students are spending far more time than the others. In conclusion, the factor of “the time for their own use” decides the progress of the students’ listening and speaking ability. The factor of “time for academic use” plays only a supporting role.

### **Some findings from the informal situation (Summary)**

1. Large-scale parties are held by American students. Japanese students are invited and attend these parties. But these occasions are quite few, compared to the number of gatherings Japanese students have among themselves. At these gatherings, American students are usually rare guests and in the minority. Most of the members are a mixture of Asian and Japanese students. At AEI there are no American students because it is a language school for foreign students. On a more personal level, the same thing happens. My data show that Japanese students are socializing more with Asian students than with American students. More precisely, the Japanese students gather in someone’s room with other Japanese and Asian



students and invite American students to join them. They are sharing American students. This situation is in a way normal, considering that even among Americans, black people tend to gather together. There is one strong illusion in Japan: When you study abroad, you can easily make many American friends and talk with them all the time. This rarely happens except on campus.

The important fact is that, even in this situation, Japanese students are making rapid progress in speaking English. The reason is simply because they are speaking English and communicating with other friends. The partners do not necessarily need to be Americans. They feel easier talking to Asians, because they share many more topics in common. Standard English can be learned easily in classes, from American friends and from TV. This much contact with standard English is good enough to improve their English.

This situation suggests that the Japanese students can develop their speaking ability, even if they stay in Japan. The point is how much the students speak English and communicate, whether they are in Japan or America. What makes the difference is that the amount of communication the students are experiencing here never occurs in Japan. If Japanese society anticipates more young people fluent in English, it should set up many artificial settings (little Americas) where students can use English. It is not unusual for Japanese students to speak English to other Japanese students in America. Why can not we expect that the same thing will happen in artificial settings in Japan? Only the classroom instruction is not good enough, no matter how well it is organized. Give them a chance to talk in more natural settings.

2. In the learning situation, they need both "tense" and "comfortable" situations. Alternate exchanges of the two situations lead them to proper progress in English. In tense situations, students speak English consciously and carefully. In this way, they pay attention to their English and make it sound proper and correct. In comfortable situations, students speak English unconsciously and naturally. Thus, they internalize unconscious speech habits and gain fluency. The following is a comparison of some tense and comfortable settings reported by the students.

Per week	Student	Topics	Conversation partner	Place
Tense situation	No. 7	Negotiation to renew her credit card	Office staff	Administration office at UO
	No. 20	Negotiation to ask for donation to school festival	Office member	Chamber of Commerce
Comfortable situation	No. 7	A chat	A good friend	Restaurant
	No. 2	About customers	Other sales clerk at the coffee shop	A sauna

No. 23 About Japan

An American friend  
who is interested in  
Japanese language  
and culture

An apartment room

Whether they like it or not, living in America requires Japanese students to go through these alternate situations and allows them to make progress.

3. The process of foreign language learning is a repetition of “gaining confidence” and “losing confidence.” Student No. 26 reported that he felt happy when he could communicate with a waitress. But he was shocked when she brought a dish that was different from his intended order. Usually students feel happy when a tutor, teacher, or friend praises their progress in English. Usually they are discouraged when they do not understand what an American says or can not make themselves understood.

There is a big difference in their confidence level. Student No. 9 said she did not mind meeting other Japanese because she was confident in her English. On the other hand, there are so many complaints and frustrations among AEI students that they do not understand English.

When do students feel confident and comfortable speaking English? At what level? Even student No. 9 said she had yet to ask her host mother to help her correct the mistakes in her papers. At difficult levels, they repeat the same struggle of “gaining confidence” and “losing it.” If someone reached the stage he or she does not feel any more struggle and has nothing to worry about, that means he or she has reached the *bilingual* level.

But when we apply this question to the lower level students studying here, more concrete answers will emerge. They are frustrated by their poor English skills. What factors help them get out of their frustration and make them feel comfortable living in America? Where is the fine line between frustration and comfort?

One persuasive answer was given by student No. 14. She is going to AEI, which means that her English was insufficient to be accepted by an American college. But she feels confident. Why? Because she can understand what Americans are saying in the streets. She said she can understand TV programs fairly well, and children’s programs perfectly. She mastered the English sound system while she was in Malaysia in her elementary school days.

Her situation indicates that even if we do not communicate properly, it is comfortable if we can understand what people are talking about. It is a matter of time before we start talking, as long as we understand what those around us are talking about.

Although most Japanese students have enough vocabulary to conduct basic conversation, they can not activate their vocabulary simply because they can not understand the way Americans speak. How frustrating it is! What a waste of time, if

they must wait to talk until they start understanding the way Americans speak.

More English sounds practice should be given to the students in Japan while they are young. One student (No. 26) said he could understand his tutor's English but he could not understand when his American friends were talking. Tapes containing more natural conversation should be introduced into sound practice.

In Japan, since listening ability is in a practical sense not as helpful as reading ability, people tend to build up their reading ability (mainly for college examinations). But what we are doing is putting the cart before the horse. Just like babies first listen carefully and then begin to talk after they accumulate a certain knowledge, so do adults. After that there comes reading and writing. The trouble is that once people acquire their own accent, it becomes very difficult to get rid of it. When people speak with that accent, native speakers have a hard time understanding and begin to avoid the company. A self-developed accent also prevents people from understanding spoken English. It takes them much longer to understand TV than the people with a good sound system of English. In my observation, the students who graduate from college in Japan and then come to America have more difficulty getting rid of their Japanese accent than the students coming to America right after graduation from high school.

(To be continued)