

## 論 文

## A Study of University Students Who Studied Abroad for a Year

— The Development of L2 Proficiency and Career Selection —

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Professor**Abstract**

This paper presents the findings of a longitudinal case study that investigated three research questions: the development of L2 proficiency during the university term; relationships between the grade point average (GPA) and variables related to L2 proficiency at the high school and university level, study abroad, motivation, and metalinguistic knowledge (MK); and the career selection of those who studied abroad. 18 female participants from a department that required overseas study took part in the study. They took the TOEIC IP, TOEFL iBT, and MK tests. A questionnaire regarding their motivation to study English was administered and additional interviews were held, and their attitudes toward learning were closely observed. The results showed that academic English skills did not markedly improve before study abroad, but after study abroad, general and academic English skills did improve with the exception of their academic reading skills, although there were individual difference. The GPA was moderately connected with the TOEFL iBT, motivation, and MK. One third of the students got a job related to using English including students who decided to study abroad again. Most students realized the gap between their L2 proficiency and what was required in the business world during their job searches.

*Keywords:* study abroad, L2 proficiency, longitudinal case study, metalinguistic knowledge, career selection

**Introduction**

Although the total number of Japanese students who study abroad has been decreasing, the number of students who study abroad based on a reciprocal agreement between universities including a short period such as three- or four-week language learning programs in the target language countries actually has been

increasing (JASSO, 2015)<sup>1)</sup>. Recently, university education for globalized citizens has become very popular in Japan owing to the fact that the government has been stressing the importance of global education for developing human resources (Prime minister and his cabinet, 2012). Such an education policy has led to a situation where an increasing number of universities in Japan have been trying to create new

departments of international or global studies, to set up study-abroad programs for students, and to accept students from overseas. However, there have been few studies on study abroad programs themselves in Japan in comparison with other countries. In particular, it has not been clarified to what extent and how university students develop their English proficiency during study abroad. Also, little research has been undertaken to find out how these students select their career after graduation. Thus, this study explored three main areas: 1) how university students in a department that required them to study abroad for about a year develop target language skills, 2) how variables of study abroad and learning at university are correlated with L2 proficiency at high school and university, motivation, and MK, and 3) what kind of job these students select at the time of graduation. The research will be useful not only for university teachers who have a similar program for globalized human development, but also for university teachers of English. This case study will give some hints for nurturing university students to become global citizens. It adopted the method of a longitudinal case study not only because detailed analyses are necessary for this kind of pioneer work, but also because previous research found that individual differences play an important role regarding the outcomes of research on study abroad (Kinginger, 2008).

### **Background**

In contrast to the elite study-abroad in which only high-ranking people could learn and introduce foreign cultures such as Japanese envoys to Sui Dynasty China and people sent to Europe and the US at the end

of the Tokugawa period and at the beginning of Meiji, the recent type of study abroad can be called a universal approach owing to the fact that more and more normal average citizens can visit foreign countries and study there (Iida, 2013). There are various types of study abroad at present. They can be categorized from the viewpoints of age (e.g., high school students, university students, working adults), target language (e.g., English, French, German, Chinese, Korean), length of stay (e.g., short-term, medium-term, long-term), and objectives (e.g., language learning, pursuing a degree from a university overseas, self-enlightenment, in-service training). This paper deals with a study abroad program in a department of a university where all students have to study in English-speaking universities for about a year. The goals of study abroad in university education can be summarized under four points: enhancing the target language skills, experiencing cross-cultural communication, learning academic fields, and personal self-development (Iida, 2013). This paper deals with a study abroad program in a department of a university where students are required to study in an English-speaking university for about a year. To the best of my knowledge, there are a few studies exploring and evaluating such a study abroad program.

There have been a large number of studies on study abroad in general. Previous research on study abroad covers three areas: target language abilities, affective domains, and socio cultural aspects. Since this paper is mainly concerned with L2 proficiency, the literature review concentrates on the influence of study abroad on L2 proficiency. A great number of studies on L2 proficiency have conducted noting that study abroad

generally has a good influence on L2 proficiency, not only in Japan (e.g., Kimura, 2011, 2012; Otsuka, 2008; Sasaki, 2004), but also in the US and European countries (e.g., Kinginger, 2009).

Research on study abroad can also consider the context of learning, which means that “whether the learning takes place within the society in which the L2 is productive or whether the first language (L1) is productive.” (Collentine, 2009, p. 218). According to Serrano, et al. (2011), there has been little research confirming the superiority of study abroad over an intensive program at home except for a few areas, most notably oral fluency, despite the fact that people in general believe that learning/practicing the L2 in the country where it is spoken is much better for language progress than L2 classroom learning. It has been demonstrated that students after study abroad are more fluent than students in an intensive program at home (e.g., DeKeyser, 1991; Freed, 1995; Lafford, 2004; Serrano, et al., 2011). Also, it was reported that students after study abroad gained more vocabulary than their peers in an intensive program at home (DeKeyser 1991; Dewey, 2004). However, regarding other language areas, students in a study abroad program are not always superior to those who study at home (Collentine, 2004; DeKeyser, 1991).

The role of accuracy in L2 learning in study abroad is also an important topic to investigate. DeKeyser (2010) examined how and why accuracy in speaking develops during study abroad, examining 16 US students of Spanish as a second language during their 6-week program in Argentina. He found that “students who are motivated and eager to practice and hope to improve

their speaking proficiency dramatically” (p. 80) resulted in quickly feeling “that they are stalled and lose their motivation” (p. 80) because students’ shaky grammar knowledge and lack of proceduralized knowledge prevented them from automatizing their knowledge. This study showed the significance of grammar knowledge not only in general L2 learning but also in developing speaking skill during study abroad. The significance of grammar knowledge leads to the role of metalinguistic knowledge in L2 learning because of the close connection between them. Metalinguistic knowledge is defined as abstract and analyzed knowledge of grammatical rules perceived to underlie language use (Hu, 1999; Iida, 2012). It is usually tapped by a grammaticality judgment test. Many studies examined the relationship between metalinguistic knowledge and L2 proficiency (e.g., Hu, 1999; Roehr, 2006; 2008). Iida (2012) found that metalinguistic knowledge leads to good performance on L2 reading. The role of metalinguistic knowledge in a study abroad context has not been examined; therefore, this paper will examine the role of metalinguistic knowledge in study abroad.

In addition to the lack of research on study abroad programs that require university students to attend a target language university, there seems to be some issues concerning research on L2 in tertiary education. Because previous studies did not utilize standard L2 proficiency tests, we do not know to what extent students develop their L2 proficiency. To the best of my knowledge, no study has examined university students’ development of L2 proficiency over the four years of their university experience, whether or not that included a year-long

study abroad program. Furthermore, not only business leaders (e.g., Mikitani, 2012) but also researchers (e.g., Koike, 2010; Yoshida, 2003) cited TOEFL test scores to show that the English level of Japanese people is worse than that of other peoples in the world. Despite such criticism, there seems to be no study examining how university students increased TOEFL test scores.

The Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, and Technologies (MEXT) is now promoting human resource development for global education (2012). More and more universities are sending students to overseas to have intercultural experiences and raise their intercultural communication skills. Terasawa (2015) pointed out that although the government, business world, and researchers of English language education stress the increasing need for English language ability, very few studies have examined it. Moreover, previous research has not covered how learners who studied abroad begin their career after graduation. Thus, the present study investigates what kind of job students who studied abroad select when they decide their career.

A review of the previous research found that university students' actual data for English language proficiency is not sufficient. In particular, it is not known to what extent, how, and why university students' English proficiency develops during university education. Also, it has not been clarified how study abroad helps to influence L2 proficiency and the relationships among variables of learning at secondary school, learning during study abroad, learning at university, L2 proficiency, motivation and MK. Furthermore, we do not know which

career course students who have experienced study abroad take. Thus, the goal of this paper is to examine how university students develop L2 proficiency during university education. To clarify it, the following four research questions were formulated to shed light on the above issues:

1. How do university students in an intensive pre-study abroad program develop L2 proficiency?
2. How do university students develop their L2 proficiency during study abroad?
3. What are the relationships among grades at university, English language learning at high school and university, learning during the study abroad period, and metalinguistic knowledge?
4. What kind of career do university students choose after study abroad?

## Method

The present research adopted a case study to examine carefully how university students develop L2 proficiency over four years. Not only statistical data but also individual cases were undertaken to examine university students' development of L2 proficiency. In the first place, I analyzed the study abroad program of this university by examining four research questions. The data for research questions 1, 2 and 3 were quantitative data and datum of research question 4 was qualitatively categorized.

There were not a large number of participants in this study, but I selected eighteen participants carefully so that they represented the whole of this program. The process of participants' selection will be shown below.

### **Curriculum and Study Abroad Program**

The explanation of participants needs to be preceded by that of the curriculum and the study abroad program. This study focused on a department of international studies in a women's university located in the western part of Japan. All students in this department are required to study abroad in English-speaking universities for two semesters, the second-year autumn semester and the third-year spring semester.

The curriculum of this department has three stages of learning: before study abroad, during study abroad, and after study abroad. This research dealt with all three stages of learning at this university. From the first-year spring to second-year spring semester students studied English intensively to get high TOEFL iBT and GPA scores, both of which were used to decide their target universities in English-speaking countries. A placement test was administered during freshman orientation to form small classes by level. The number of students in each English skill class was usually less than 12 members. They learned English academic speaking, listening, reading, and writing intensively in the English program. The total amount of English study in the first three semesters, excluding students' self-study, was about 500 hours. In addition, they learned content subjects such as British studies, North American studies, Japanese history, and Japanese culture as required subjects and some other courses as elective subjects. These courses were usually carried out in English.

The length of stay overseas was different from country to country or university to university, for instance, nine months for students who went to Britain and twelve

months for students in Canada. Therefore, students in the department had to stay in an English-speaking country for at least for two semesters, or nine months. There were twenty-eight English-speaking universities that a student could apply to. Their university was decided based on their highest TOEFL iBT and GPA scores before study abroad. In this study abroad program students were divided into three types of sojourn overseas: direct entry into academic courses (AC), the course from ESL to academic (ESL → AC), and the ESL-only course. Students who obtained the required TOEFL iBT score that a university set could take academic courses from the beginning. About five percent of the students enrolled in academic courses directly. About eighty-five percent of students moved from ESL to academic courses. They studied hard in ESL courses to obtain the English proficiency that each ESL course established. However, about ten percent of the students were not successful in enrolling in academic courses. According to the home university's rules, students who only took ESL courses cannot transfer credits to the home university, so students in the ESL programs overseas studied hard to finish ESL and enroll in academic courses. After returning from study abroad, all students usually took a few English skill courses as well as writing graduation essays in English in seminar courses. Even if students did not get any overseas credit, they usually graduated within four years.

### **Participants**

Eighteen participants out of the ninety students who enrolled in the 2010 academic year took part in this study. As mentioned

Table 1

*Basic Demographic Data*

No.	Pseudonym	English Proficiency		OE	Placement test	
		EIKEN	TOEIC	Month	Total	Class
1	Junko	Grade Pre2	730	12	130	1
2	Yumi	Grade 2	650	12	115	2
3	Asuka	Grade 2	550	36	115	2
4	Sayuri	Grade 2	550	1	111	2
5	Matsuko	Grade 2	650	12	107	2
6	Mariko	Grade 2	550	12	105	3
7	Yuka	Grade 2	Not taken	0	97	3
8	Ai	Grade 2	Not taken	1	96	4
9	Sakura	Grade 2	650	12	94	4
10	Hanako	Grade 2	Not taken	0	88	5
11	Hikari	Grade 2	Not taken	1	87	5
12	Mako	Grade 2	Not taken	1	84	6
13	Etsuko	Grade 2	Not taken	0	81	6
14	Yoshi	Grade 2	550	12	76	7
15	Aoi	Grade 2	Not taken	1	74	7
16	Minako	Grade 3	Not taken	0	69	8
17	Aki	Grade 3	Not taken	0	64	8
18	Shuko	Not taken	Not taken	1	60	8
	Mean			6.3	95.3	4.6
	SD			9	15.6	2.3

Note. OE=Overseas experiences.

earlier, they were chosen cautiously so that they were representative of the whole program. Basic demographic information is given in Table 1, showing the pseudonyms assigned to the students as well as the results of English proficiency tests they had taken at high school, overseas experiences before enrollment in this department, and results of the placement test and the English skill class based on the placement test at the time of the enrollment. As shown in Table 1, most students passed EIKEN Grade 2 and some had taken the TOEIC test. TOEFL practice test (ETS, 1997) and a writing test were used as a placement test. The former was composed of questions in listening

section (N=50), the reading section (N=50), and the structure and written expression section (N=40). The test was a multiple-choice type and raw scores of these sections were used. The writing section asked students to write an essay in English in about 150 words within 30 minutes. The prompt of the writing test was "Only people who make a lot of money are usually successful. Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Give specific examples and reasons to support your response." A holistic evaluation was employed and each essay was marked by two native speakers of English. The score ranged from 5 to 50. The maximum total of the placement test was 240 points,

Based on the scores of the placement test, students were placed into eight classes from Class 1, the highest class, to Class 8, the lowest class. Judging from the means and SD in the Class column, the participants were placed in each class almost equally, which suggests a relatively high reliability of selecting participants in this study. Also, almost all students passed EIKEN Grade 2, which is a MEXT benchmark for high school graduates (EIKEN, 2015).

### Data Collections

Data for research questions were obtained by the following procedure. First, scores of four skills in the TOEFL iBT test held in June when they were first-year were compared with those held in December to investigate research question 1. Regarding research question 2, both the TOEIC IP and TOEFL iBT tests were employed as L2 proficiency tests to examine general and academic L2 proficiency. I used standard L2 proficiency tests, the TOEFL iBT and TOEIC IP, in this study to make clear to what extent students develop their L2 proficiency over four years. The former evaluates students' academic English skills while the latter assesses students' general English skills. The participants took the TOEIC IP test when they were second-year students before study abroad and in the third year after study abroad. They also took the TOEFL iBT test in December when they were third-year students after study abroad. The listening and reading sections of the TOEIC IP test before study abroad were compared with those after study abroad. The four skills of the TOEFL iBT test before study abroad were compared with those after study abroad. I examined to what extent

participants' scores increased or decreased.

For research question 3, I selected two variables related to learning at high school: the overseas experiences before entering university and the placement test at university. In this study abroad program I knew the length of staying overseas before university from a questionnaire at the time of registration into the program. Newly admitted students took the placement test just before classes started so it was reasonable to employ the test as a variable of English learning at high school. As a variable for study abroad, the number of overseas credits students obtained was used. As a rule, in this program only credits of academic courses at English-speaking universities were converted to those of academic courses of this university.<sup>2)</sup> I chose L2 proficiency, motivation to study, and the GPA as variables of university learning because these variables were important to evaluate their learning. I employed the TOEIC IP and TOEFL iBT tests before and after study abroad as L2 proficiency. Motivation to study at university was evaluated after study abroad when they were fourth-year students in January through interviews by the author (See Appendix 1). The results of interviews were converted to a five-point Likert scale, ranging from five points (highly motivated) to one point (not motivated at all). The questions of the interview are shown in Appendix 1. The number of overseas credits was calculated by the amount of time students spent for academic courses at university overseas. Students' accumulated GPA during four years was used in this study. According to this university, 4.5 is the maximum score of the GPA.

MK can be tapped by The Grammaticality



Judgment Test (TGJT). According to Bialystok (2001), a grammaticality judgment test itself is metalinguistic in that focusing on the form of a sentence during language processing needs MK, which goes against the normal processing of language that usually takes meaning greatly into consideration. MK was elicited by correction and justification sections in TGJT (e.g., Bialystok, 2001; Renou, 2001). In this test, participants first had to judge a sentence, identify an error if the sentence is wrong, and then correct the error, and finally state a rule for the error. It was composed of 30 ungrammatical sentences. Participants were given one point if they were able to correct an error and one point for the correct statement of a rule. Therefore, the maximum possible score of these tests were 60 points. A Japanese university teacher of English majoring in applied linguistics marked both tests independently. The test was devised to cover English grammatical rules that were different from the Japanese equivalent to shed light on the difference between L1 and L2. They included articles, noun (countable/uncountable and singular/plural), verbs (causative verb, tense, and aspect), the subjunctive mood, adjectives/adverbs, relative pronouns, and auxiliary verbs. Items were mainly based on sentences in a book for EFL learners, *English Grammar in Use* (Murphy, 2004), including errors that were considered to be relatively easily identifiable (See Appendix 2).

Finally, with respect to research question 4, I used students' occupations obtained through interviews before graduation, examining to what extent students will use English at work.

### Data Analysis

This was a longitudinal case study using a within-participant design. Eighteen students were chosen from 90 students who enrolled in 2010 and graduated in 2014. They were selected almost equally from the different levels of the English skill classes in which they had been placed by the placement test held during freshman orientation; this suggests that they represented all students (See Table 1). Quantitative analyses were preceded by qualitative ones. With respect to Research Question 1, I compared scores of the TOEIC IP and TOEFL iBT tests before study abroad with those after study abroad. Regarding research question 2, first, the listening and reading sections of the TOEIC IP test before study abroad were compared with those after study abroad. Next, four skills of TOEFL iBT performed in the first year in December, and those conducted in third year after study abroad were compared by using a repeated *t*-test. Regarding research question 3, Pearson's product moment correlations were used to examine correlations among the GPA, the TOEIC IP test, the TOEFL iBT test, the length of stay overseas before enrolling in university, the placement test, motivation to study, credits they obtained during study abroad, and MK. To investigate research question 4, student's job placement was analyzed as to whether they would use English or not based on the job category and an interview held just before graduation. In particular, I examined the influence of study abroad on job hunting. Finally, based on not only the quantitative data but also the results of interviews held before and after study abroad were utilized to discuss how university students develop L2 proficiency over four years in the



**Table 2**  
*TOEFL iBT Scores Before Study Abroad (N=18)*

	Reading		Listening		Speaking		Writing		Total	
	BSA1	BSA2	BSA1	BSA2	BSA1	BSA2	BSA1	BSA2	BSA1	BSA2
Mean	11.4	13.1	10.6	11.9	14.5	15.9	15.7	15.8	52.0	56.7
SD	4.7	3.3	5.2	4.6	3.5	3.2	3.4	3.5	11.3	11.8
Max	18	20	19	20	20	23	20	22	73	83
Min	2	7	3	2	10	9	12	12	36	39
<i>p</i>	n.s.		n.s.		.018		n.s.		.009	

Note. BSA1= before study abroad 1<sup>st</sup> year June. BSA2= before study abroad 1<sup>st</sup> year December.

discussion section.

## Results

To examine research question 1, four skills of the TOEFL iBT scores obtained in June of their first year were compared with those in December of their first year (Table 2). Repeated *t*-tests found that there were not any differences in the reading, listening, and writing sections (reading:  $t(16)=1.630$ , n.s. ; listening:  $t(16)=1.301$ , n.s. ; writing:  $t(16)=1.117$ , n.s.), but there was a significant difference in speaking with a small effect size:  $t(16)=2.626$ ,  $p=.018$ ,  $d=.4$ .

Tables 3 and 4 illustrate the development of English proficiency during study abroad. Two students were absent from the TOEIC IP test in Table 3. Students increased scores of both listening and reading sections of the

**Table 3**  
*TOEIC IP Scores Before and After Study Abroad (N=16)*

	Listening		Reading		Total	
	BSA3	ASA2	BSA3	ASA2	BSA3	ASA2
Mean	343.2	417.2	269.4	344.4	612.6	761.6
SD	73.5	39.3	80.6	51.1	145.2	80.8
Max	465	480	405	465	870	945
Min	230	417.2	269.4	344.4	370	630
<i>p</i>	.001		.002		< .001	

Note. BSA3=before study abroad 2<sup>nd</sup>-year June. ASA2=after study abroad 3<sup>rd</sup>-year October.

TOEIC IP test during study abroad with large effect sizes (listening:  $t(14)=4.179$ ,  $p=.001$ ,  $d=1.31$ ; reading:  $t(14)=3.797$ ,  $p=.002$ ,  $d=1.32$ ). Also, students' listening, speaking and writing scores of the TOEFL iBT rose steadily during study abroad with large effect sizes (listening:  $t(16)=3.490$ ,  $p=.003$ ,  $d=.97$ ; speaking:  $t(16)=3.999$ ,  $p=0.001$ ,  $d=.70$ ;

**Table 4**  
*TOEFL iBT Scores Before and After Study Abroad (N=18)*

	Reading		Listening		Speaking		Writing		Total	
	BSA2	ASA3	BSA2	ASA3	BSA2	ASA3	BSA2	ASA3	BSA2	ASA3
Mean	13.1	13.6	11.9	15.7	15.9	18.2	15.8	18.8	56.7	66.4
SD	3.3	5.4	4.6	3.2	3.2	3.4	3.5	2.8	11.8	11.3
Max	20	27	20	23	23	23	22	25	83	95
Min	7	5	2	13	9	13	12	15	39	51
<i>p</i>	.596		.003		.001		< .001		< .001	

Note. BSA2=before study abroad 1<sup>st</sup> year December. ASA3=after study abroad 3<sup>rd</sup> year December.

writing:  $t(16)=5.618, p<.001, d=.95$ ). However, as shown in Table 4, the results found that the reading section of the TOEFL iBT test did not improve during study abroad ( $t(16)=.541, n.s.$ ). The total scores of the TOEIC IP test (Table 3) imply that students gained relatively high scores compared with those of normal university students whose TOEIC IP total scores were 440 (Listening 247 and Reading 193). Although students gained statistically significant scores when comparing the total scores of June in their first-year (BSA1 in Table 2) with those of December of their third year (ASA3 in Table 4), their listening, speaking, and writing skills are at the intermediate level and reading is basic level (ETS, 2015). Thus, to sum up the results of research question 2, the results confirmed that although their

skills were generally at the intermediate level, students' English proficiency increased during study abroad except for academic reading.

Research question 3 inquired into relationships among variables of English language learning at high school and university, English language learning, learning during study abroad, and MK. In particular, I examined how the length of staying overseas (LOE) before enrolling in university and the placement test (PT) are related to L2 proficiency, overseas credits (OC), motivation, and MK. Next, I focused on how OC is related to other variables. Finally, I investigated how the GPA is concerned with other variables, showing these relationships in Table 5. The results showed that LOE is only moderately related to the placement test

Table 5

*Correlations among Factors of Study Abroad, MK, L2 Proficiency, Motivation and GPA*

	LOE	PT	MK	BSA iBT6	BSA iBT12	ASA iBT12	BSA TOEIC	ASA TOEIC	OC	MO	GPA
LOE		.560**	.117	.393	.403	.211	.317	.097	.047	.355	.165
PT			.549**	.819**	.795**	.651**	.758**	.546*	.419	.711**	.290
MK				.675**	.594**	.659**	.610**	.375	.471*	.455	.598**
BSAiBT6					.824**	.747**	.821**	.748**	.598**	.808**	.505*
BSAiBT12						.871**	.827**	.808**	.342	.594**	.381
ASAiBT12							.800**	.775**	.259	.557*	.572*
BSA TOEIC								.651**	.196	.613**	.452
ASA TOEIC									.525*	.538*	.352
OC										.417	.331
MO											.504*
GPA											

*Note.* LOE=length of overseas experience before enrolling in university. PT=placement test. MK=metalinguistic knowledge. BSAiBT6=TOEFL iBT 1<sup>st</sup>-year June. BSAiBT12=TOEFL iBT 1<sup>st</sup>-year December. ASAiBT12=after study abroad TOEFL iBT 3<sup>rd</sup>-year December. BSATOEIC= before study abroad TOEIC IP 2<sup>nd</sup> year June. ASATOEIC IP=after study abroad TOEIC IP 3<sup>rd</sup>-year October. OC=Overseas credit. MO=motivation. GPA=accumulated grade point average.

\* $p<.05$ . \*\* $p<.01$ .

( $r=.560$ ) and the strength of correlation between the placement test and L2 proficiency became weaker as they moved up to a higher grade, which suggests that English proficiency gained at high school including overseas experience is not so important as learning at university. Next, the study found that OC is related with some L2 proficiency tests and MK moderately, which indicates that OC is not always correlated with L2 proficiency. It does not have a relationship with the GPA. Lastly, the results showed that the GPA is correlated moderately with MK, motivation, and the TOEFL iBT test after study abroad. There is not a significant relationship between the GPA and the TOEIC IP before and after study abroad. What is more interesting is that the relationship between the GPA and

the TOEIC IP test became weaker after study abroad whereas the relationship between the GPA and the TOEFL iBT test became moderate after study abroad. The results imply that the GPA seems to be correlated with academic studies and motivation to study at university, in particular a moderate relationship between the GPA and MK suggests that the GPA might be related to grammatical analysis and its explanation, which can be regarded as academic L2 proficiency.

The final research question was to examine whether experiences of study abroad influence students' career choices at the time of graduation or not. In particular, I examined what career students who had studied abroad chose and how those careers are related to the use of English. Table 6

**Table 6***Placement Test, L2 Proficiency, GPA and Career Selection*

No.	Pseudonym	BSA1		SA		L2 proficiency ASA3			Graduation	
		PT	iBT	SA type	OC	TOEIC	TOEFL iBT	GPA	Career selection	
1	Junko	130	73	AC	23	895	95	3.6	1 Student at university in the US	
2	Yumi	115	58	ESL→AC	3	760	72	2.03	3 General office work	
3	Asuka	115	60	ESL→AC	15	750	68	3.29	2 Flight attendant	
4	Sayuri	111	73	AC	30	945	89	3.35	2 Employee at venture company	
5	Matsuko	107	58	ESL→AC	5	735	70	2.44	1 Student to be an interpreter	
6	Mariko	105	58	ESL+AC	28	780	63	2.00	1 Part time job at bilingual school	
7	Yuka	97	51	ESL→AC	18	815	63	2.40	3 Advertising agency	
8	Ai	96	50	ESL+AC	30	720	51	2.43	2 Airline ground personnel	
9	Sakura	94	62	ESL+AC	30	770	68	3.19	3 Sales person	
10	Hanako	88	32	ESL only	0	630	62	2.76	3 General office work	
11	Hikari	87	45	ESL→AC	12	665	68	2.78	2 Hotel employee	
12	Mako	84	64	ESL→AC	12	835	70	3.09	3 General office work	
13	Etsuko	81	47	ESL→AC	6	700	65	2.72	3 General office work	
14	Yoshi	76	40	ESL only	0	600	57	2.21	3 Student at vocational school	
15	Aoi	74	42	ESL→AC	12	500	49	2.83	3 Bank clerk	
16	Minako	69	44	ESL→AC	9	710	60	2.89	1 Student at ELS in New Zealand	
17	Aki	64	39	ESL→AC	12	715	58	2.24	3 General office work	
18	Shuko	60	36	ESL→AC	6	760	67	2.56	3 Managerial career	
Mean		95.3	52.0			761.6	65.4	2.71		
SD		15.6	11.3			80.8	9.8	.46		

*Note.* PT=placement test scores. OC=overseas credit. GPA=Accumulated GPA. BSA1=before study abroad first-year June. ASA3=after study abroad third-year December. Types of SA: AC=direct entry to Academic courses. ESL→AC=from ESL class to AC. ESL+AC=both ESL class and Academic courses. ESL only=ESL class only.

illustrates participants' results of the placement test, L2 proficiency after study abroad, the GPA, and career selection at the time when they graduated university. As Table 6 was arranged according to the results of the placement test, the same as Table 5, it can be easily confirmed that the placement test is not related to L2 proficiency after study abroad and the GPA shown in Table 6. Table 6 also illustrates that although all participants did not get a job using English, one third of the students found a job that needs English at least to some extent or intended to develop their career by studying abroad again. Career choices were largely divided into three groups: 1) students who chose a career strongly related to using English; 2) students whose job was related to using English to some extent; 3) those whose job was not related to using English. Six students were categorized as category 1. What is more important is that such career selection was carried out, regardless of differences in L2 proficiency. Let us consider individual cases of these students from the viewpoint of the relationship between career selection and the possibility of using of English in their future job. Asuka, a flight attendant, (No. 2), Ai, ground staff at an international airport, (No. 8), and Hikari, a hotel employee (No. 11) have a greater possibility to use English with English-speaking customers than other students. Although she was employed as a general office worker, Mako (No. 12) was told at the interview with a senior manager that she would be asked to move to another section in which English is mainly used in a few years. Junko (No. 1) enrolled as a third-year undergraduate in an American liberal arts college provided with a full scholarship for

two years; she is aiming to be a researcher in the future. Matsuko (No. 5) decided to go to a technical school because she wanted to be an interpreter some day. Mariko (No. 6) could not become a police officer, so she did a part-time job at a Japanese English bilingual elementary school to help elementary students in the classroom. Lastly, Minako (No. 16) went to an English language school overseas to be a teacher of English as a second language. The interviews with these students revealed that before departure to English-speaking countries all students hoped to utilize English skills in their future career that would be improved by study abroad. However, after returning to Japan they knew their English skills had not reached a sufficient level for use in the business world. Moreover, students' motivation to study English had changed because of the experiences of job hunting after study abroad. They were exposed to the harsh realities of finding a job. They learned to reflect on themselves and analyze themselves while trying to find a job that they want and filling the gap between the job they want and their own English proficiency. Especially they faced the realities of career searching not only at seminars of job hunting held by the career support center at the university but also at interviews during job-hunting. Most students interviewed in the study said that they were able to have confidence to speak English after study abroad so that they wanted to work at a company using their English, but they gave up on jobs that required English not only because they realized that they needed to enhance their English skills but also because they needed to be employed in the first place. Most students could not afford to study at a

graduate school overseas. Therefore, a few students decided to study abroad again to improve their English skills and cultivate their professional skills for future work, but most students chose employment.

### Discussion

The results of research question 1 showed that in the pre-study abroad program students did not make good progress in English reading, listening, and writing skills (except for speaking skill), which suggests that it was difficult for students to develop academic English skills in six months even in this intensive program. This does not mean that the pre-study abroad program was ineffective in improving students' English proficiency. The intensive program before study abroad was invaluable in establishing the foundation of developing academic English skills for not only academic studies overseas but also those at home after study abroad. As shown in Table 1, the fact that almost all students had EIKEN Grade 2 at the time of the enrollment indicates that they had basic English skills. Such skills do not automatically lead to academic English skills required at an English-speaking university. Their English skills need to be developed adequately so that they could enroll in courses in English-medium universities. However, their average total scores of four skills were below 60 BSA 1 and BSA2 (Table 2), which implies that their English skills were not as high as those required to enter universities overseas directly. This does not mean that students did not study English eagerly, but they learned academic English with much motivation to obtain admission to their target university in an English-speaking country. The results of the

questionnaire asking students' individual learning hours outside classroom showed much longer hours than those of students of the other four departments at this university. Also, the decision process of selecting an English-speaking university might affect students' motivation to study English before study abroad at this department. The English-speaking university students could apply to was decided based on their first-year GPA and highest TOEFL iBT scores.

Moreover, they learned English in a friendly atmosphere in a small class because they all shared the same goal, to study abroad. The intensive English program and learning environment of this department were created by the faculties of this department, who have a key role to encourage students to develop their English skills and to motivate them to study English and academic fields. Four native speakers of English and two Japanese teachers of English collaborated to teach academic English skills intensively before study abroad. They shared aims, materials, and teaching techniques. Every Tuesday they met and discussed students' learning for half an hour. In particular, they shared aims of teaching, improved methods of teaching, analyzed the results of L2 proficiency tests, and reflected on students' learning. Three teachers out of those who teach English skill courses have academic courses including the course of writing a graduation paper in English as well. Moreover, collaboration between teachers and staff was established in this department. Especially, collaborative work was very effective in supporting students' study and life during study abroad (Iida, 2013). Thus, it can be said that students in this department studied English

with potentially tense competition in an otherwise congenial atmosphere that was supported by the faculties of this department. Almost all participants did not reflect on their intensive English program before study abroad without stating that they studied English eagerly.

It is interesting to discover that only, the academic speaking skill was improved in this intensive English program. One of the reasons for this result might be the small number of students in a class. There were usually from ten to twelve students in a speaking class, as mentioned earlier. Also, students were very interested in speaking English. In fact, the interviews after study abroad revealed that they all wanted to speak English fluently with people around the world when they went abroad. They had a strong incentive to be able to speak English well overseas before study abroad. However, they did not practice speaking sufficiently at high school except for students who studied abroad. A small-sized classroom and motivation in a congenial atmosphere might be main reasons for enhancing a speaking skill.

Although students' English skills did not progress markedly in the intensive English program before study abroad as expected, they improved their skills during study abroad as shown in Tables 2, 3, and 4. The results in general seem to be congruent with the previous studies in which study abroad has some good influence on students' English skills. Also, Table 6 illustrates each individuals' development of L2 proficiency from June of the first year to December of the third year. There were individual differences in the development of L2 proficiency as Kinginger (2009) stated. In the present study

abroad program 12 students out of 18 started to study English in the ESL courses attached to the university, three students took both ESL and academic courses at the same time, and only two students began with academic courses. Among the 12 students, two students could not get overseas credits, which means that they only studied English at ESL courses and could not attend academic courses. Ten students were able to move from ESL courses to academic courses, obtaining from 3 to 18 overseas credits. The three students named Mariko, Ai, and Sakura in Table 6 could get 28 or 30 overseas credits, but they took courses including non-academic courses such as P.E. and ESL courses<sup>3)</sup>. The university these students had enrolled in had a policy to accept them based on the agreement between the home and overseas university. In other words, those students seemed not to have sufficient time to read academic materials because of limited exposure to academic classes. Junko and Sayuri in Table 6 were the only students who took "purely" academic courses from the beginning. Both students had high TOEFL iBT scores but also high GPA scores. They said that they had sufficient time to read academic materials in academic courses when they were studying overseas. Therefore, the results suggest that in general study abroad helped to develop their English skills, but academic reading skills need more time to progress.

Also, the results in Tables 3 and 4 seem to display a contradiction in that students got significantly higher reading scores on the TOEIC IP test while they did not on TOEFL iBT test. This difference can be explained in terms of the qualitative difference between the tests. The reading section of the TOEIC

IP test evaluates general reading skill whereas the TOEFL iBT test assesses academic reading skill. Therefore, it can be concluded that students gained general English and academic English skills, but not academic reading skills through study abroad.

Research question 3 has three significant suggestions regarding the variables related to English language learning at high school, learning during study abroad, and final grades at the time of graduation including MK. First, OC is not always correlated with L2 proficiency, nor with the GPA. OCs are given to students based on credits gained overseas on the transcript, which are converted to credits at the home university. The number of credits from the university overseas can be calculated and transformed to that of the home university based on hours of study needed for a credit at the home university. The English-medium universities that this university has agreements with have different admission policies for accepting overseas students so that OC does not always have a close relationship with L2 proficiency and the GPA.

Next, English proficiency gained at high school including overseas experience is not as important as English language learning at university. It is true that students who had experienced study abroad before admission spoke English confidently and their level of English was higher than other students when they took the placement test. But these students often seem to lack academic knowledge that they should have learned at high school in Japan. They usually stayed overseas at least one year. There were even some students who studied for three years in English-speaking countries. These students

were very good at communicating in English because they survived in an English-medium life, but they could not take academic courses as students in the country did because of limited academic English abilities. What is worse is that there were a few students who were not interested in learning at university because of lacking an academic foundation. It is certainly not the case that students who studied abroad in high school always become such a student, but there were some cases of this. In this study, for example, Yoshi (No. 14 in Tables 1 & 6) is such a case. She had stayed overseas for one year and had a TOEIC score of 550 at enrollment, but she got only 600 after study abroad. Her TOEFL iBT scores and GPA were low. She did not have high motivation to study at university nor did she show a particular interest in learning. One reason for her low motivation might be a lack of academic foundation that should have been nurtured in high school. On the other hand, Mako did not study abroad in high school, but she had high motivation to learn at university. English language learning at high school plays an important role in developing students' communication skills and study abroad helps them improve them. However, concentrating on English language learning excluding other academic learning at high school seems to be an issue of the balance between the role of academic contents and the role of the English language learning at high school.

Third, the GPA is correlated with academic studies and MK including motivation. This result seems to be natural in that the GPA in this study means accumulated grade point average over four years, but suggests an important point for university education including L2 learning. The GPA includes not



only grades of English skills but also those of academic contents at university. It also has a moderate relationship with motivation because motivation to study at university is often evaluated in the course work. However, the GPA does not involve OC. It is interesting to discover that the GPA is moderately related with MK, which implies that the GPA might be related to grammatical analysis and its explanation. This can be accounted for by the fact that MK contributes to academic L2 proficiency (Iida, 2010, Roehr, 2008). In other words, MK might have an important role in developing GPA and academic L2 proficiency. But further studies on the role of MK are needed.

Finally, as mentioned earlier, at present more and more universities in Japan are sending a great number of students to universities overseas because of global human resource development, but there has not been any study in Japan to investigate the influence of study abroad. Research question 4 found out that one third of the students found a job that requires the use of English to some extent or that they intended to develop their career by studying abroad again, regardless of differences in L2 proficiency. The results did not provide conclusive evidence that study abroad affects students' choice of career at the time of graduation. Nor did they demonstrate that the present study abroad program contributes to enhancing global human resource development. Nevertheless, the present study suggests that the study abroad program might have some influence on their career selection. It is true that intensive English language learning at university including study abroad can become a means of establishing students' future careers, but

students faced the realities of job hunting after study abroad. Although students' English skills were much higher than those of normal university students, most of their skills were not as high as those actually demanded by business. Most students wanted to improve their English skills, but they could not afford to study at graduate school in Japan or in English-speaking countries.

### Conclusion

This study found that students in this English program including study abroad studied English very hard not only before study abroad but also during study abroad so that their general English skills improved to a great degree. However, it is difficult to become proficient in academic English skills over four years. Although they did not develop their academic English skills except for academic speaking before study abroad, students enhanced not only general English skills but except for their reading skills, they clearly increased their academic listening, speaking, and writing skills after study abroad. Unlike studying for four years overseas, a one-year study abroad program has some limitations for the development of academic English skills. The GPA is moderately related to academic English proficiency, motivation, and MK. This finding indicates that correcting a grammar error and stating the rule for it might be related to both academic skills in L1 and L2. However, further studies on this relationship need to be done because correlation does not refer to a cause and effect relationship. Finally, it was found that one third of participants chose a career using English at the time of graduation, which does not directly lead to

international human resource development. However, the discovery suggests that the intensive English program including study abroad might result in some good effects on students' development of an international career. This needs to be investigated in further studies, too.

There are some limitations of the present study. First, this is a case study with only female students. Further studies with more participants including male students and a variety of English proficiency levels might be necessary to examine intensive English language programs including study abroad. Also, students' motivation to study abroad, their attitude toward academic studies, and their career development during university need to be examined. In particular, it is necessary to examine how students' motivation to study English, their attitude toward academic studies, and their careers are formed and changed during four years at university.

Findings of the present study give some pedagogical implications for English language learning at university. Nowadays, English language education in Japan, in particular at the university level, has been criticized as not being effective. However, it is important to know the realities of students' development of English language skills over four years at university. The students in this program were instructed in an ideal L2 learning situation where most courses were conducted in English in a small class. Moreover, students were given a chance to study abroad for a year. Even in such a favorable situation, not all students reached an academically high level of English. This fact suggests that it takes longer time for students to be proficient in an academic L2.

To cope with this, I have two suggestions. First, study abroad in high school for more than a year certainly leads to good performance in English, but sometimes leads to poor academic studies that should be nurtured in high school. It is very demanding to develop and connect both the English language and academic studies, but at least the foundations of both foreign language skills and contents need to be raised at high school. In addition to this, it would be better for students to teach themselves how to monitor and regulate their own learning so that they could develop their English in the future (Shividko et al., 2015). Literature on self-regulated learning indicates "those who perform best are those who are taught how to monitor their own performance and allowed to do so" (p. 20). It might be difficult to have a great deal of exposure to English in university curricula. There might be many areas of study that students should tackle during university. A key point is not to have a lot of hours of English in the curricula, but to regulate students' learning of English for themselves.

Finally, it goes without saying that sending students overseas is not easy because of the possibility of emergencies within ongoing unstable world situation. Nevertheless, there is no greater pleasure for the teachers than to see students who have matured as a result of study abroad.

#### Notes

- 1) The number of university students who study abroad based on the agreement in 2012 is 43,009 while that in 2013 is 45,082.
- 2) There were a few universities where grades of the English language courses were written in the transcript. As long as grades were

described on the transcript, grades of English language courses were converted to those of the home university.

- 3) Mariko, Ai, and Sakura studied at the same English-medium university where grades of the English language courses were on the transcript.

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## Appendix 1

The interviews were conducted after participants filling out the following sheet. The same questions were used in the interview.

英語力と動機づけ (Motivation)、将来の英語使用の関係に関する質問紙のまとめ

( ) さんの TOEFL iBT の点数の推移

	May, 2010 1 <sup>st</sup> year	June, 2010 1 <sup>st</sup> year	December, 2010 1 <sup>st</sup> year	December, 2012 3 <sup>rd</sup> year
Reading				
Listening				
Speaking				
Writing				
Total				

1. 点数を見ながら、大学入学までの英語学習について思い出したこと、その当時考えたこと、英語に対する考え方、動機づけ等ができるだけ多く書いてみよう。箇条書きでよい。
2. 点数を見ながら、1年次の英語学習について思い出したこと等、できるだけ多く書いてみよう。箇条書きでよい。
3. 留学中の英語学習について思い出したことを、できるだけ多く、書いてみよう。Listening, reading, speaking, listening それぞれについてどのようなことを実施したか。どのような気持ちで取り組んだか。
4. 自分の英語力の推移について思ったことを全て書いてみよう。
5. TOEIC と TOEFL iBT を両方受験して、感じたことを全て書いてみよう。
6. 現時点で、卒業後どのような進路を選択するのだろうか。就職の場合は、職種と英語をどの程度使うのかを書いてみよう。進学の場合は、どのようなことを目指すのかを書いてみよう。

## Appendix 2

The Grammaticality Judgment Test (TGJT)

次の英文を読んで、英語の文として文法的に正しいものに○、はっきりしないものに△、間違っている場合には×をつけてみよう。英文に誤りがある場合には、誤りの部分を書き出し(またはその前後を書き)、正しい語句を書いてみよう(余計なものがある場合にはトルと書いてみよう)。また、誤っている場合は、その理由、つまり、どんな英語の文法的規則を破っているのかを簡単にわかりやすく日本語で書いてみよう。

例 Taro like English very much.

○、△、×	誤りの部分→正しい答	理由(どんな英語の文法的規則を破っているか)
×	like → likes	主語が三人称の場合 s をつける。

1. If I had three million yen, I will buy that car. \*million 百万
2. Look at those clouds. It will rain.
3. I'm afraid of the dogs.
4. She has been waiting for an hour before I met her.
5. I demanded that he would apologise. \*apologise 謝る
6. It's a beautiful day. Let's sit in a garden.
7. If I were rich, I will buy a yacht. \*yacht ヨット
8. Can you hear a music?
9. The restaurant that we had dinner was near the airport.
10. This is the office on which Bill works.
11. English people I know drink a lot of tea.
12. How long are they married?
13. We saw some people which car had broken down.
14. Hanako and Kenji are very happy married.
15. The water boils. Can you turn it off?
16. When have your friends arrived ?
17. A shoplifter is someone which steals

- from a shop.
18. (At the party) Hello, Jane. Do you enjoy the party?
  19. Was the weather good when you are on holiday?
  20. We were good friends. We were knowing each other well.
  21. We discussed about a lot of things at the meeting.
  22. I refused answering any more questions.
  23. Let me know if you need more informations.
  24. Did you have those curtains make?
  25. Two hundred people employed by the company.
  26. Although rained a lot, we enjoyed the party.
  27. Not have a car, she finds it difficult to get around. \*get around あちこち行く
  28. Sara has lived in London since ten years.
  29. Mr. Smith: Have you walked a dog.  
\*walk ~を（散歩に）連れて行く  
Mrs. Smith: Yes, I have.
  30. If Ellen had joined at the time, our team will be a better one.