

Developing a Language Learning Program in the Philippines

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Abstract: After the one-month English learning program in 2017, a questionnaire was administered to the participants from Baiko Gakuin University. In this research there were two objective variables: the participants' satisfaction with the whole program and their motivation to study overseas again. As a result of stepwise multiple regression analyses, three explanatory variables were found for each of the objective variables. However, a variable representing online English lessons was not selected as an explanatory variable to either of the objective variables.

Keywords: short-term study abroad motivation satisfaction

1. Introduction

Baiko Gakuin University (hereafter referred to as “BGU”) has implemented various kinds of language programs in the Philippines for the past five years, such as a short-term language training, an internship program at a system engineering company, voluntarily teaching program at elementary schools, and others. The short-term language training, which is a one-month program from the middle of August to the middle of September, is the largest program among the language programs at BGU in terms of the number of participating students (hereafter referred to mainly as “participants”), with an aggregate total of approximately 250 in 2017.

After returning from The Philippines, each year a questionnaire is given to and filled out by the participants. This questionnaire was originally designed in 2013, when the first program was implemented. The purposes were to see how satisfied the participants were and to use the data for publicity activities and recruiting students. Due to a few technical problems, it has been slightly modified to the current format, with 23 multiple-choice and

6 free description items, and the current version was completed in 2015. The results of the data analyses every year indicate that the participants are greatly satisfied with the program in general.

However, because of the remarkable recent popularity of learning English in the Philippines, the number of students has been drastically increasing. Especially, language schools in Cebu have been approaching a saturation state, with a shortage of quality teachers in the last few years. Therefore, last year BGU attempted to add a new language school in Panay to the program to solve this issue. Although this change helped lead to another successful program, it can be said that this program is facing a turning point. To uphold or even improve the quality of the program, it is necessary to understand what are the most important factors of participants' satisfaction, and what still needs to be done.

From this point of view, two main research questions were developed for this research.

1. What factors are most important for satisfaction among the participants?
2. What factors of this program encourage the participants to step forward to participate in future programs?

The purpose of this study is to learn what influences students' satisfaction with this program and motivation to study overseas again in order to create a more sophisticated program in the future. The program can be improved by responding to the research questions above. In this study, to clarify these two research questions, the questionnaire administered after the 2017 program is analyzed.

While some factors are more significant than the others, it does not necessarily mean that they are the only factors to be maintained. Instead, in developing a better program, those factors are expected to be strengthened and other factors need to be fixed and modified as much as possible.

2. Background

Recently, due to the globalization in progress, it is said that the importance of the English language has been increasing. Many universities in Japan have been seeking to expand their short and long-term study abroad programs. According to the statistics in Japan Student Services Organization (JASSO) (2017), 84,456 Japanese students studied

abroad from April 1, 2015, to March 31, 2016. Among them, 51,266 stayed overseas for less than one month, which is called ‘short-term study abroad.’ In addition, as for the ranking of their destinations, the most popular was the United States, the second Canada, and the third Australia. Interestingly, the tenth was the Philippines, which ranked first among the Asian countries whose common language is English.

In this chapter, recent studies regarding study-abroad programs are reviewed, followed by an overall description of the one-month language program in the Philippines offered by BGU and the possible strengths of the program.

2.1 Previous research regarding study abroad

For many years, the effects of study abroad programs have been investigated in different aspects, especially in the improvements of students’ proficiency and motivation. Research often utilizes TOEFL or TOEIC scores to measure students’ proficiency of English and observe improvements between the scores gained before and after the programs (Nonaka 2001; Nonaka 2002; Kuramashi 2014). In these types of research, the programs studied are shorter than three months and the main improvement is seen in students’ listening ability.

In addition, like previous studies, the latest studies focus on how much more motivated students are after a study-abroad program. Kobayashi (2017) suggests that a study-abroad program positively influences learners’ motivation and attitude to learn English, regardless of the length of the program. Kato & Suzuki (2017) indicate that the participating students of short-term study abroad programs are significantly more motivated to join a long-term program than the non-participating students. Ohmae et al. (2017) show a possibility that participating in a study abroad program could promote students’ willingness to join a volunteer activity, and could also contribute to their career planning.

The main interest of research like the ones above is typically on how positively the students changed. The research hasn’t been concerned with how negatively students may change or what factors or elements in a program could affect either students’ proficiency or their mental aspects. However, it would be quite meaningful to understand such things in the sense of developing a better program. Therefore, this study attempts to focus on what impacts students’ mental aspects.

2.2 Overall description of the program

In 2013 BGU started the short-term language training program in Cebu, which was comparatively earlier than other universities in the Kyushu, Shikoku, and Chugoku areas. Actually, BGU introduced “the three-step study-abroad system,” under which other foreign language majors (as well as English majors) are encouraged to participate in more than one study abroad program before their graduation. Among the various English training programs, this program in the Philippines has been treated as “the first step.” It certainly takes an important role to help motivate students to join future programs as their second, third, and even more steps. Therefore, it is essential to maximize students’ satisfaction through the program and make them start thinking about studying overseas again. Fortunately, the results of the questionnaire each year show that the program has encouraged many of the participants to learn English more and to join in the second and third programs.

Based on the idea of the entire study abroad system in Baiko Gakuin University, the purposes of this program are set as follow.

- 1) To make students learn English more efficiently by helping them improve their English abilities (especially listening and speaking) intensively at the early stage of college.
- 2) To encourage students to acquire practical English abilities for use in their future in business and learning settings by being exposed to the current situation of how and how much English is used in Asian countries.

(Kuramashi 2014: 44)

2.3 Possible strengths of the program

To fulfill the purposes discussed above, this program is not simply a one-month program providing only language training. It requires participants to take a preparatory course once a week in advance in which they not only do paperwork but also learn practical English through online English lessons. Such lessons provide opportunities for the participants to improve practical English skills by conversing with teachers in other countries using Skype. They are required to do such an assignment 25 minutes a day until leaving for the actual language training program in the Philippines. Students assist in the

evaluation of the program in the free description sections in the questionnaire, participants state their affirmative comments on the lessons.

This program also requires the participants to join a volunteer activity in The Philippines. They join this activity once during their stay and visit slum areas and observe how people survive in a severe environment. In addition, the participants visit non-profit organizations that volunteer to educate children in the slums. The participants were clearly impressed through the participation of such an activity according to the results of the questionnaire, especially in the free description items.

3. Methodology

About one week after the program, in the beginning of the second semester, a paper-based questionnaire was administered to the participants of the program. 65 out of the 75 participants responded, which gave the response rate of 87%.

The participants answered each question on a five-point scale from “Strongly disagree” to “Strongly agree.” The current questionnaire contains 4 sections: satisfaction, changes through program, interests in further learning overseas, and others. Its original purpose was to see merely how satisfied participants are after the program; therefore, the items in it were not intended to show standard normal distributions. The 23 questions are listed in the appendix.

In addition to the multiple-choice question items, the questionnaire includes others inquiring their gender and grade as well as the department or major they belong to, and the language school they attended in the Philippines. The questionnaire also consists of 6 free description questions. However, due to the irrelevancy to the data analysis in this study, these items are observed for limited descriptions or discussions.

4. Result and Analysis

This section discusses the results of the data analysis of this research. To answer the research questions, there are mainly two aspects to consider from the data: 1) determining variables of the participants’ satisfaction with the whole program and 2) determining variables of their motivation to join a study-abroad program in the future.

4.1 Descriptive statistics

Table 1 indicates the means and standard deviations of the 23 items in the

questionnaire.

Table 1 *Mean and standard deviations of items (n=65)*

Item	Mean	SD	Item	Mean	SD	Item	Mean	SD
1	4.71	0.46	9	4.64	0.74	17	4.71	0.55
2	4.42	0.83	10	4.72	0.52	18	4.38	0.88
3	4.77	0.46	11	4.38	0.72	19	4.42	0.86
4	4.55	0.88	12	4.08	0.82	20	4.46	0.87
5	3.51	1.11	13	4.46	0.59	21	4.78	0.65
6	3.37	1.14	14	4.28	0.78	22	4.05	0.90
7	4.25	0.85	15	4.34	0.73	23	3.97	1.01
8	4.77	0.46	16	3.89	0.81			

Note. *SD* = standard deviation.

As seen in Table 2, Item 21 was the highest showing the participants' motivation toward studying abroad again. It is followed by Items 3 and 8, which are related to the teachers and lessons in the Philippines respectively. On the other hand, Items 5, 6, 16, and 23 show low means of less than 4.0. Among the four items, the lowest was Item 6 (mean=3.37), which shows the participants' satisfaction level of the meals served at the dormitories that they stayed in during their stay. The second lowest was Item 5 (mean=3.51), which shows the participants' satisfaction level of the dormitories that they stayed in.

In addition, observing the items in section 2, the highest was item 10, and Items 17 and 9 follow. On the other hand, Item 16 was the lowest, and Items 12 and 11 followed.

4.2 Explanatory variables of Items 1 and 21

Next, multiple regression analysis was conducted in order to understand which factors influenced the participants' satisfaction of the program and which encouraged them to learn overseas again in the future. As displayed in the list of the question items in Chapter 3, this research set up two independent variables: Items 1 and 21. As mentioned earlier, this questionnaire was not designed to analyze the data statistically and the question items are not capable of extracting factors as influential variables. With the intention of solving this technical problem, this research utilizes the stepwise multiple regression analysis to choose the explanatory variables out of the 21 items, which were initially meant to be objective variables.

After several attempts to add and reduce the variables setting Items 1 and 21 as the dependent variables, three explanatory variables were successfully selected. Table 1 shows the result of a stepwise multiple regression analyses with the dependent variable of Item 21.

Table 1 Explanatory variables of Item 1 (n=65)

Variables	β	p-value
3. Satisfied with teachers	.413	.000
9. Satisfied with volunteer activity	.254	.019
10. Like English better	.276	.010
Gender (dummy)	.016	.879
R=.616, R ² =.379		

Notes. Item 1: I am satisfied with the whole program.

As seen in the table above, item 3 was the most influential variable to Item 1 ($\beta = .413$, $p < .01$). The variable representing the participants' satisfaction level of the volunteer activity was also selected and ranked second. It should be noted that the analysis of variance of this model showed a significant probability ($p = .000$) so that this model is statistically valid. In addition, the multiple correlation coefficient and coefficient of determination were respectively .616 and .379.

Next, the following is the result of another stepwise multiple regression analysis with the dependent variable of Item 21.

Table 3 Explanatory variables of Item 21 (n=65)

Variables	β	p-value
16. More Confident in English	.408	.000
20. Want to go to Cebu/Panay again	.259	.023
2. Satisfied with school	.259	.024
Gender (dummy)	.012	.913
R=.594, R ² =.353		

Note. Item 21: I want to study overseas again.

According to Table 3, Item 16, which represents the participants' increased confidence in their English abilities, was ranked highest among the three explanatory variables. Items 20 and 2 followed the item showing almost the same value of β at $p < .05$. Remarkably, the variance of this model was significantly probable ($p = .000$), meaning that this model was valid. In addition, the multiple correlation coefficient was .594, and the coefficient of

determination was. 353.

5. Discussion

This chapter discusses whether or not the analysis is effective enough to respond to the two research questions of this study. Therefore, it especially focuses on what variables determine the participants' satisfaction with this program and motivation to study abroad again, followed by a discussion about the online English lessons.

5.1 Influences to participants' satisfaction

As observed in Table 2 in the Chapter 4, there were three explanatory variables found to Item 1, which is one of the two objective variables in this study. Noticeably, the satisfaction with teachers in language schools was the most influential to the satisfaction with the whole program. Teachers are certainly one of the greatest strengths not only of the language schools but also of the entire program which BGU offers. Many are experienced teachers with knowledge and skills of the English language and language teaching. Most importantly, they are cheerful and encouraging to students. Students often express their affirmative feelings about their teachers and enjoyment of the lessons during and after their stay in the Philippines.

Next, a volunteer activity was the second most significant to the entire satisfaction level of this study. As mentioned earlier, it can be said that this activity is one of the strengths of this program. Usually in papers that the participants submit after the program ends, they give comments on their visit to the slum areas and volunteer organizations, expressing how it impressed them. In addition, this activity plays an important role in changing the participants' attitudes and behaviors. Perhaps because of cultural differences, not a few participants experience cultural shock. However, going through such an activity leads them to overcome their mental difficulties and somehow helps them adjust to the new environment. From these aspects, this activity definitely takes a crucial role for this program to succeed, and ought to be maintained.

Last, the third powerful was the participants' emotion that they started to like English better than before they had joined this program. Dörnyei (2001) states that intrinsic motivation shows behavior that is done for oneself, which can be experiencing pleasure, satisfaction, or just for satisfying their own inner curiosity. This improvement in the

affection may possibly be showing an enhancement of their intrinsic motivation, which can have an impact on their English proficiency. Murrell et al. (2015) implies a remarkable influence of study-abroad programs on learners' proficiency of English. This study abroad program is also capable of improving the participants' language proficiency by increasing their intrinsic motivation.

One thing to add in note is that the contribution rate was not quite high enough for only the three variables to determine the objective variable as seen in Table 2 ($R^2=.379$). That is, there should be more factors to determine the variable. This might have been caused by potential limitations of this study, and is discussed again later.

5.2 Influences to participants' motivation

As observed in Table 3 in the Chapter 4, three explanatory variables to Item 21, the other objective variable, were selected in this study. The enhancement of the confidence in English abilities had the greatest impact on the motivation to study overseas again. In other words, making the participants confident can be an effective way to encourage them to join further study-abroad programs. Deci & Ryan (1985) argue that a learner can change from an extrinsically motivated learner to an intrinsically motivated one by meeting three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Among them, the need of competence possibly refers to a learner's confidence in learning English. Therefore, participants of this program can be intrinsically motivated by feeling confident in their English abilities that they improved through this program.

Next, there are two variables that showed almost the same strength of impact on the objective variable although their statistical significances slightly differ. One is participants' willingness to go to Cebu or Panay again, and the other is their satisfaction with the language schools. The former seems to be quite parallel to the objective variable in nature, so it is not surprising for it to be an explanatory variable. On the other hand, the satisfaction with school gives concrete suggestions. To be precise, the selection and maintenance of language schools can be a key in encouraging students to study overseas again. As a matter of fact, for the last four years, negotiations with different language schools have been continually done to develop a better program. It isn't necessary to say that the language schools seem to contain different strengths and weaknesses in comparison with each other. Some of the issues are the ones that this country originally has, and are difficult to solve or even avoid. However, for a better development of the program, more

effort is expected in this area.

Similar to the first dependent variable, the second experienced a low contribution rate having three variables to determine it as seen in Table 3 ($R^2=.353$). Again, there should be more factors to explain this variable. It is to be discussed in the later section.

5.3 Discussion about online English lessons

This section discusses how the online English lesson system functioned in this program. Item 22, representing the system, did not appear as a determining factor to either of the objective variables. The mean and standard deviation of this item were respectively 4.05 and 0.90, which may show a certain level of satisfaction. In addition, according to the responses in the free description section, there were a considerable number of comments where students felt that online English lessons had greatly helped them to prepare for lessons in the Philippines. However, observing the summary of their lesson participation statistics for three months before leaving for the Philippines, students did not necessarily take lessons at high rates (mean=39.82 percent, standard deviation=0.28).

Prior research focused on students' satisfaction with such an online lesson system. Mita (2014) reported that the students showed great satisfaction with the online lessons, indicating a statistically significant difference at the beginning and the end of the study concerning L2 communication confidence at $p<.01$. In addition, Nagamatsu (2015) reported how successfully the online-lesson using Skype enhanced students' motivation to study English as well as how they react to it. According to the result of her research, the students were generally satisfied with the program, showing a motivation toward improving their English proficiency (Nagamatsu 2015: 92). Unlike these articles, this study is not capable of strongly asserting that the online lesson system was successful. This may have been caused by a problem which the questionnaire potentially contains, and it is to be discussed in the next section.

An online-lesson system using Skype is expected to force students to practice English skills in conversation practically and earnestly (Matsumoto et al., 2013: 4). Learners who are not quite motivated may have to be pushed to practice English until they are truly motivated. In this setting, this system should be reinforced to seek more practical and proficient language skills of students. To do this, it is important to understand both how this system is functioning and also utilize a better way of estimation.

6. Limitations and suggestions

It was eventually meaningful to evaluate the program with the current questionnaire. This is because it found some influential elements which help to explain participants' satisfaction and motivation, and also because it clarified problems of both the program and this study. One of the causes of the problems were the questionnaire. Many of the question items resulted in ceiling effects, which potentially did not enable them to have standard normal distributions. Consequently, influential variables were not found, and it certainly affected the results of the analysis. The objective variables in particular were determined only with explanatory variables created out of the question items at the low contribution rate.

To solve the problems, a better measure ought to be developed, which would lead the program to be estimated in an appropriate way. In particular, it is definitely necessary to develop question items to evaluate the language schools, the volunteer activity, and the preparatory course (including online English lessons). These aspects of the program should be estimated with multiple items, which would turn out to be powerful explanatory variables.

Another cause is the design of the program, especially how to carry out the preparatory course before leaving for the Philippines. Although comments in the free descriptions about the course were generally positive, its influence was not statistically significant enough to satisfy and motivate the participants. In this study, it was not possible to create a powerful enough variable to represent the effectiveness of the preparatory course. For a better development of the study abroad program as well as for a better analysis of the data, it could be necessary not only to select a more sophisticated quantitative methodology but to investigate the program qualitatively. This could mean, for example, including interviews of participants and observations of lessons in the Philippines.

However, it is not merely about a problem of the questionnaire, but also about how this course prepares students for their learning overseas. Many previous researches regarding study-abroad programs have merely reported their own positive aspects (Kudo 2009; Ikeda 2014). However, those researchers emphasize only one side or part of study abroad programs, reporting their positive effects, and excluding discussions about how to improve educational effects, and also about culture shock and the risks of accidents or troubles

(Ikeda 2014). Based on this point of view, the program in the future is expected to focus on potential issues during the program in the Philippines more than before, and to embrace such aspects in the preparatory course. It would possibly enable this program to satisfy and motivate students, avoiding problems that could happen.

7. Conclusion

This study attempted to evaluate the one-month language training program in the Philippines by looking at the data out of the questionnaire after the program. However, it was not successful to fully understand what truly satisfies participants and motivates them to learn more in a foreign country. Of course, students have different interests and motivations, so it is almost impossible to satisfy and motivate all of them. However, attempts to know about students need to be repeatedly done, which would lead the program to be more successful. Research is expected to be continued to understand this program better.

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Appendix

Section 1: Satisfaction

1. I am satisfied with the whole program. (objective variable)
2. I am satisfied with the language school I attended.
3. I am satisfied with the teachers at the school.
4. I am satisfied with the staff members at the school.
5. I am satisfied with the dormitory I stayed in.
6. I am satisfied with meals the dormitory served.
7. I am satisfied with the facilities and services of the dormitory except for the meals.
8. I am satisfied with the lessons at the school.
9. I am satisfied with the volunteer activity I joined.

Section 2: Changes through program

10. I like English better than before the program.
11. I can speak English better than before.
12. I can write English better than before.
13. I can listen to English better than before.
14. I can read English better than before.
15. My English abilities are better than before.
16. I am more confident in my English than before.

17. I got eager to learn English more than before.
18. I am more interested in the Philippines than before.
19. I am more interested in Cebu than before.

Section 3: Interests in further learning overseas

20. I want to go to Cebu or Panay in the future.
21. I want to study overseas again. (objective variable)

Section 4: Others

22. Online-lessons beforehand were helpful.
23. I studied outside the lessons every day in the Philippines.