

The Development of Local Norm Awareness in Out-of-class Peer Interaction during Study Abroad: The Case of a Japanese High School Student

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The present research reports on a case study of a Japanese high school student's ten-month study abroad (SA) experience in the U.S., mainly focusing on out-of-class peer interaction. It employed the language management theory (LMT) as a framework (Neustupný, 1997) in order to qualitatively investigate the student's actual interaction, not only from a linguistic but also a sociolinguistic and sociocultural perspectives (Neustupný, 1997). Moreover, LMT elucidates the process of language management by emphasizing how individuals note and evaluate different phenomena occurring in contact situations as well as how they plan and implement adjustments (Neustupný, 1997). The data were longitudinally gathered on a twice-a-month basis via *email interaction reports* (Fairbrother, 2018), in which participant was asked to write about: 1) a chronological description of the events they engaged in during the past 24 hours, and 2) any other self-selected intercultural episodes.

The findings illustrate the participant's development of awareness of local sociolinguistic norms in her out-of-class interactions. Firstly, despite the fact that previous LMT studies on SA have pointed out that international students struggle to initiate social networks especially with local students (e.g., Fairbrother, 2017), in this study the participant developed a norm for participating in group interactions with local students. She reported a case wherein she was able to create opportunities to interact with a local peer group by participating in card games. In the report, she reflected on the event and evaluated it positively and hence this experience furthermore encouraged her to join the game repeatedly. Secondly, in the reports the participant was clearly developing awareness of local norms regarding conversation topic selection. She noted unfamiliar conversation topics selected by local peers such as family issues, which were rarely brought up by her friends in Japan. Despite these unexpected topics, she evaluated this difference neutrally and analyzed it by comparing her experiences in Japan and the U.S.. Thus, the above two cases demonstrate the process of the participant's development of awareness of local sociolinguistic norms and moreover both cases seem to indicate the possibility that such awareness could have been facilitated by iterative self-reflection (Byram, 1997). This study, hence, also attempts to suggest the pedagogical potential that the methodology of *email interaction reports* could provide.

References

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