

**Learning English as an International Language:
Study Abroad in a Multilingual Society**

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This study examined whether a two-week study abroad (SA) program in Malaysia based on the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach yields significant linguistic and non-linguistic changes for Japanese as a foreign language students. A total of 90 university students from various faculties participated in this study. Two research questions were addressed: (1) Does the study abroad program based on the CLT and English as an International Language approach change the participants' learning attitude? and (2) Does it improve the participants' English language proficiency? To examine the effects of this SA program, a student survey, student self-evaluations, and teacher interviews were conducted. The results showed that the SA program has the possibility to (1) change students' learning attitude and (2) improve students' oracy skills (listening and speaking). However, the results did not provide conclusions regarding the program's ability to improve students' literacy skills (reading and writing skills). The implication of the study findings are discussed in detail in the paper.

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Learning English as an International Language: Study Abroad in a Multilingual Society

Study abroad (SA) programs have recently gained popularity worldwide, especially in higher education. The trend has created various opportunities for students to add an international experience to their academic careers. According to statistics provided by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the number of students participating in SA programs has experienced a more than four-fold increase in the past three decades, which is from 0.8 million worldwide in 1975 to almost 3.7 million in 2009, (OECD iLibrary, 2011).

SA programs often offer “a wide range of learning contexts, varying in length, academic content, and degree of immersion in the host culture” (Norris & Dwyer, 2005, p. 121). Foreign language (FL) teachers and learners often agree that involvement in SA programs is one of the most effective ways to learn a second language (cited in Amuzie & Winke, 2009), as they offer greater opportunities for interaction in the target language.

However, despite their popularity, SA programs have not been a widely researched topic (cited in Llanes & Munoz, 2009). Little research has been conducted on the outcomes of study abroad (SA) programs, especially those that take place in countries where English is used as a second language in multilingual contexts. In view of this, this study aims to report the outcomes of an SA program in Malaysia, where English is taught as second language in a multilingual context.

Literature Review

Definition of Study Abroad (SA) Programs

Study abroad (SA) is defined broadly as “the international movement of students and scholars” (cited in Wells, 2006), which may include short-term and long-term programs, students exchange programs, service learning abroad, internships, and others. Short-term SA programs are commonly defined as programs that last less than

a semester or quarter. They range from “weeklong programs ... in conjunction with a single course, to three- or four-week programs ... to longer programs of up to eight weeks that can involve homestays, travel to multiple sites, and service or research experience” (Smith, 2009, p. 12).

Besides, Freed (1995) defines SA as a period of residence in another country or province where the target language is spoken, combined with classroom-based language and/or content area study (cited in Heather & Herron, 2003). However, the previous research on SA has not taken into account whether the target language is spoken as the first language or a second language in the country of study.

Japanese Students’ Participation in SA Programs

English is now perceived as a significant communication tool in the global community. Acquiring enough English proficiency to share ideas or culture with speakers of other languages is widely accepted as a key skill in higher education of countries around the world. With this concept in mind, SA programs sending students to countries where English is used as a second language have begun to capture the attention of both researchers and educators in Japan.

In the past decade, Japan has witnessed a high growth in the number of SA programs offered at colleges or universities. According to the latest statistics provided by UNESCO Institute for Statistics published in Global Education Digest 2012, there were 40,487 Japanese students participated in SA programs in 2010. (Institute of International Education, 2012)

English as an International Language (EIL)

McKay (2002) claimed that English has been widely accepted as an international language; it is used both in a global sense for international communication between countries and in a local sense as a language of wider communication within multilingual societies. The SA programs sending students from monolingual countries, such as Japan, to multilingual countries, like Malaysia, have different objectives from

those that send students to countries where English is spoken as the first language.

Malaysia is a multilingual country where English is used as a medium of communication among people who have different linguistic backgrounds, such as Malay, Chinese, and Tamil. In such a multilingual context, there is a frequent occurrence of code switching (Nunan, 2003). Furthermore, people maintain their own languages and culture instead of adjusting themselves to one unity of language and culture. This multilingual context is considered as one of the most suitable settings to learn English as an international language (EIL).

Teaching English as an International Language

The primary purpose of teaching EIL is to give students the skills to share their ideas and cultures. According to Llurda (2004), teaching EIL is different from giving traditional lessons in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) or English as a Second Language (ESL) contexts because it involves drawing careful attention and taking advantage of knowledge of learners' own culture and language.

In EIL classrooms, learners are provided with opportunities to share their own culture with speakers of other languages (McKay, 2000; 2003). Furthermore, code switching to the learners' mother tongue or vice versa is considered as a pedagogical tool to practice learners' language skills; educators do not seek to make artificially monolingual settings (Auerbach 1993; Cook 2001; Llurda, 2004). In other words, traditional ESL classrooms try to equip language users with the ability to communicate with native English speakers, but EIL classrooms seek to give language users enough common language skills to promote mutual communication in English among speakers of different languages.

English Language Education in Malaysia

English language teaching was established in the early nineteenth century by the British Government in Malaya (Malaysia before independence) through the setting up of English medium primary and secondary schools in Malaya. After independence,

although Bahasa Malaysia replaced English as the medium of instruction in 1970, English has retained its status as a second language, and it is taught as a compulsory subject in all primary and secondary schools even today. (Foo & Richards, 2004)

Nowadays, with the extensive development and expansion of science and technology and the advent of globalization, English has slowly regained its importance in a country like Malaysia. Considering the status of English as not only an international, but a global language which links people all over the world, the mastery of this language is encouraged at all levels of education in Malaysia, especially in tertiary education, where English has become the medium of instruction at private universities and colleges.

The circumstances and contexts of teaching and learning English in Malaysia are desirable for EIL learners. To pursue its educational objectives, in the past, Malaysia needed a method of instruction that would promote the skills necessary for real communication. Therefore, Malaysia introduced a task-based approach in the pedagogical field in the earliest period (Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Nunan, 2003). The necessity of English skills is expanded not only in domestic but also international settings in Malaysia.

As described above, Malaysia can be safely stated as one of the pioneer countries that pursue the ideal context for EIL learning. However, few studies have investigated the significant changes in FL students' linguistic and non-linguistic abilities after their participation in SA programs in the multilingual context.

Frameworks for this Study

In the framework of EIL, the curriculum for this program was developed based on the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, which is a common methodology used in English classrooms in Malaysia. The overall goal of CLT is to let students learn the organizational aspects (grammatical, discourse) of language with the pragmatic aspects (functional, sociolinguistic and strategic) in a student-centered atmosphere (Brown, 2007). The curriculum applied for this study is also created to achieve this goal. The following is the description of the curriculum based

on its key concepts to achieve this goal: self-confidence, learning models, skills-based learning/teaching, interactions, autonomous learning, and functional social interaction activities.

Role of self-confidence. Self-confidence is one of the determining factors in the success of language learning. It motivates learners to become positive about their own learning because “at the heart of all learning is a person’s belief in his or her ability to accomplish the task” (Atsuta, 2003). Therefore, to build confidence in learners, the program is designed to start with relatively simple activities. Each day, the program becomes progressively harder, including some survival English lessons and lessons to sharpen learners’ listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills in general.

Learning models. According to Social Learning Theory, models play a crucial part in the learning of new behaviors in institutionalized settings (Bandura, 1977). It is suggested that people learn from each other through imitation, observation, and modeling. To create an atmosphere and an English-speaking environment with models for the participants to observe and imitate, some selected local students with good language proficiency were involved in the teaching and learning activities.

Skill-based language teaching. Through the integrated approach that emphasizes skill-based language teaching advocating Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), the English lessons integrated all four language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. To further illustrate, the syllabus of the program emphasized oracy (listening and speaking) skills followed by literacy (reading and writing) skills. The language contents of grammar and vocabulary were integrated into these skills. Grammar was taught in context. Vocabulary building activities helped learners to expand their vocabulary and use words in different contexts. There was a continuous emphasis on critical and creative thinking skills. Opportunities for thinking operations included asking questions, discussing issues, solving problems and imagining, creating, and sharing ideas.

Learning through interactions. In the CLT approach, language learning is considered as a process growing out of the interaction between learners, instructors, texts, and activities (Breen & Candlin, 1980). The primary goal of this approach is to achieve communicative competence (Richards, 2006). The curriculum in this SA

program has adopted and applied some unique features of CLT to facilitate students' "interaction."

Autonomous learning. In CLT, learners are given responsibilities for their own learning and participate cooperatively in classroom activities. Instructors play the role of facilitators in class (Richards, 2006). UTAR's SA program has adopted this unique feature of CLT. The program instructors are well trained and use good team work to facilitate interaction and learning in class. In this study, two teachers, one as the main instructor and one as a teaching assistant, were placed in each class. The main instructor gave instructions in front of the class. The assistant acted as a facilitator who mainly helped students to understand the instructions given and facilitated communications among students or between students and instructor by giving them feedback. The program's uniqueness is seen in the role of the main instructors. In addition to giving instructions, the main instructors were required to play the role of "a (language) counselor" (Richards & Rodgers, 2001) to facilitate communication among students by confirming their intentions in utterances and bridging the gaps between students' utterances and what they actually meant. Furthermore, the main instructors were required to check students' weakness in grammar based on their utterances and to provide students with other opportunities to speak correctly without letting the students explicitly know that the instructor was correcting their mistakes.

Classroom activities. Littlewood (1981) distinguishes the activities in CLT classrooms into two categories: Functional communication activities include following instructions and problem-solving activities. In these activities, learners learn basic skills or learning strategies that become the basis of communication in real world settings. Then, social interaction activities include dialogue, role-play, simulations, skits, instant speech and debate, which are actual targets in communication in real settings. According to Littlewood (1980), the combination of these two different types of activities is necessary to facilitate language learning.

As described above, the curriculum for this SA program was created based on six key concepts to achieve the goal of CLT. More detailed information on class schedules will be provided in the Methodology section.

Objective of this study

Though SA programs are popular in higher education, little empirical research has been addressed their outcomes. This study focuses on an SA program conducted in a multicultural context, Malaysia, which was one of the first countries to apply CLT in formal education in the 1970s.

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the two-week CLT-focused SA program in Malaysia leads to significant changes in the linguistic and non-linguistic abilities of Japanese FL students. We measured four linguistic aspects (reading, listening, speaking, and writing) and two non-linguistic aspects (interest in English and language anxiety) using students' self-evaluations and interviews with both students and teachers. The purpose of interviews was to obtain firsthand information on the students and teachers' viewpoints.

The current study seeks to explore the effectiveness of the SA program in changing the participants' learning attitude and improving their language proficiency by answering the following two research questions:

RQ1. Does the study abroad program based on the CLT and EIL approach change the participants' learning attitude?

RQ2. Does the study abroad program based on the CLT and EIL approach improve the participants' English language proficiency?

Method

Participants

A total of 90 university students from various faculty participated in the SA program. Table 1 shows the number of students who participated. Of all the faculties, the largest group is from the faculty of Pharmaceutical Sciences. The smallest group is from Base College.

Table 1*The Number of Participants in Each Faculty*

	Social Sciences	Humanities	Tourism	Pharmaceutical Sciences	Base College
Freshman	10	2(2)		4(20)	(2)
Sophomore	6(2)	(7)		1(2)	
Junior	14(1)	1		1(2)	
Senior	2	(1)	(1)		
Graduate 1	1(4)			1(2)	
Graduate 2				1	
Total	33(7)	3(10)	(1)	8(26)	(2)

Note. The number in parenthesis indicates the number of female students.

The students' motives for participating in the program varied. Table 2 shows the results of a survey conducted prior to the trip. The analysis reveals two major motives for participation. Half of the participants joined the SA program because of their intrinsic motivation ('to improve my English skills') and the other half had instrumental motivation ('to obtain academic credit').

Table 2*Motives to Participate in the Study Abroad (SA) Program*

Motive	Number
To obtain academic credits	31
To improve my English skills	42
To visit foreign countries, especially Malaysia	7
Because my friend joined it, too	4
Others	6
TOTAL	90

Schedule Overview

The SA program was conducted in the Perak Campus of Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR). This university is situated in a suburban area about 300 kilometers

from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. UTAR has a total student population of about 20,000 made up mainly of undergraduates, of which about 13,000 are in the Perak Campus. The Centre for Foundation Studies, UTAR, offers a Foundation Program to equip students with the basic skills and knowledge necessary for their undergraduate or further studies. This center also offers the SA program, aimed at giving international students the opportunity to improve their English skills as necessary to meet the demands of global community. The SA program lasts for two weeks, which includes daily language lessons, language learning and cultural exposure activities, a one-day sightseeing trip, and an overnight sightseeing trip.

After two orientation meetings held in early and late August, respectively, the students took part in the SA program from September 1–16, 2012. All the students were placed in a dormitory near the university. They were divided into five classes according to the results of a placement test given on the first day of classes.

Curriculum

This SA Program was designed to immerse EFL learners in speaking, listening, reading, and writing English, to stimulate their interest in learning English and to help them gain a deeper understanding of Malaysian culture. Instruction focused on learning English through role-playing and regular opportunities to speak one-on-one with the English instructors, faculty members, and students of UTAR. The classes and instructions were all conducted in English without the help of Japanese staff. The class sizes ranged from 20 to 25 students. Participants had approximately 32 hours of English language lessons and activities each week to be exposed to English.

Generally, the program aimed to provide opportunities for participants to use English in different contexts and for various purposes. The selected cultural setting is Malaysian and Japanese, although references can be made to the world at large.

This SA program aimed to help participants to achieve the following program objectives:

1. To communicate effectively in English for social and study purposes
2. To improve listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills

3. To extend English vocabulary and improve grammatical accuracy
4. To understand and adapt to new cultural environments of Malaysia

Upon completion of the program, participants were expected to have achieved the following learning objectives:

1. Make friends and introduce themselves
2. Socialize with friends, discuss plans, and make decisions for joint activities
3. Obtain information from various types of text
4. Use language for different purposes
5. Make oral and written presentations
6. Understand and appreciate cultural differences
7. Read texts on cultural values

The curriculum of the SA program was built on the well blending of functional communication activities and social interaction activities proposed by Littlewood (1980). The schedule is summarized in Table 3. As show, the schedule was divided into morning and afternoon sessions. We can see a certain pattern in the schedule. A lesson usually started with the functional communication activities, which provided learners the information or skills necessary to engage in the following social interactive activities, which included simulations in real contexts.

Table 3

Class Schedule Summary of Program

Morning	Afternoon
Day 1 - Placement test - Ice-breakers	- Basic greetings - Expressing feelings
Day 2 - Introducing oneself - Asking and responding to simple questions - Making verbal invitations	- Speech: Introducing oneself - Movie viewing session & discussion (Cultural Comparison:Malaysia vs. Japan)
Day 3 - Writing invitation messages	- Role-playing activity: Shopping

- Survival English Lesson:
Let's go shopping (asking for price & availability of goods, enquiring about the nature and quality of products)
 - Cultural exposure activity:
Visiting *Kampar* night market
- Day 4 - Survival English Lesson: In a restaurant (ordering food and drinks)
- Cultural exposure lesson:
Malaysian Dining Customs (reading text about Malaysian dining customs)
 - Discussion: Malaysian vs. Japanese Dining Customs
- Day 5 - Language Games
- Describing places (places of interest in Malaysia)
 - Group discussion: places of interest in Malaysia and Japan
- Weekend (overnight trip to Cameron Highland)
- Day 6 - Expressing Congratulations & Compliments
- Activity: Expressing congratulations & compliments based on context given
 - Writing descriptions/caption
 - Cultural exposure activity:
Cultural Exhibition
- Day 7 - Making phone calls in English
- Activity: making phone calls to discuss plan
 - Recounting experiences
- Day 8 - The local delicacies—reading food recipes
- Cultural exposure activity:
Local cuisine cooking demonstration
 - Discussion: Some delicious Japanese food
 - Writing cooking instructions (based on the cooking demonstration)
- Day 9 - Asking for and giving directions
- Reading a map
 - Stimulations & games: Asking and giving directions
- Day 10- Recounting preferences
- Graduation performance and work exhibition

Furthermore, this curriculum also tried to implement the essence of EIL concepts. As previously stated, in EIL classrooms, learners are provided with opportunities to share their own culture with speakers of other languages (McKay, 2000; 2003). In the present SA program, students were provided with various opportunities to express their own culture into the classroom. The schedule shows that on Days 2, 4, 5, and 9, the students were asked to talk about their own cultures or compare their events or beliefs with those in Malaysia.

In addition, the SA program incorporated the concepts and foundation of the Student-Centered Approach (SCA). SCA helps students to “develop a can-do attitude” (Jones, 2007, p. 1). According to Jones (2007), students in a student-centered classroom do not depend on their teachers all the time. SCA emphasizes collaboration among students and between students and teachers in pair work, group work, or whole class activities. Teachers in the student-centered classroom play the role of a facilitator who considers the needs of the students and encourages them to take part actively in the learning process.

In this SA program, at different times, participants worked together, in pairs, in small groups, or in a large group. They were sometimes required to work alone, such as when preparing ideas for discussion or doing short written assignments. Then, they formed pairs or groups to discuss and compare ideas and work together in role-plays or discussions. The language lessons often involved whole-class discussions in which the participants interacted with the instructor to brainstorm ideas or ask questions regarding the given tasks. Some activities were instructor-led, such as when the instructor prepared the participants with necessary knowledge and skills or explained how they would work together in the collaborative tasks. The instructor also provided comments and advice during the tasks and subsequently gave suggestions, feedback, or correction after the task. Grammar was taught in context and was based on the needs of the participants as a group or as individuals. In summary, the curriculum of the SA program can be safely described as one of the representative models of advanced CLT and EIL.

Results

The current study applied the following three dependent variables to measure the changes in participants' linguistic and non-linguistic abilities: a questionnaire on the SA program, student self-evaluation questionnaire, and teacher interviews. The next section reports the result of the student survey, which was written in Japanese and administered on the last day of the SA program.

The Student Questionnaire

The survey was given and collected on the last day of the SA program, after an explanation of its purpose. The questionnaire consists of three questions. The questions were open ended, meaning that the students to write freely in their responses. Table 4 shows the results of the questionnaire.

Q1. What do you think of the program's English class? (Good or bad, please feel free to write down anything you want to say.)

Q1 asks about the SA curriculum and instructors. Forty-eight participants reported they were pleased with either the curriculum or instructors. This means about 53 percent of the participants held positive feelings toward the English classes in this SA program.

Q2. What do you think of the program except for the English class? (Good or bad, please feel free to write down anything you want to say.)

Q2 asks about the activities held outside the classroom. Eighteen participants mentioned the teachers and students. This is evidence that most of the outside classroom activities, such as having dinner and going shopping, were well supported by the instructors and UTAR student volunteers. The buddy system was applied when the participants went out for outside classroom activities. The well-organized team consisting of trained UTAR volunteer students and instructors usually split the participants into groups and supported them by explaining about foods, cultural differences, and even how to shop. The outcome of positive feedback on Q2 can be caused by the UTAR team's great effort to make the SA program successful.

Table 4

Summary of the Questionnaire Results

Q1. What do you think of the program's English class? (Good or bad, please feel free to write down anything you want to say.)

The content of the classes matched my needs (games, activities, appropriate number of students).	31
I really liked my English teachers.	17
The immersion context pushed me to use English as much as possible.	7

Q2. What do you think of the program except for the English class? (Good or bad, please feel free to write down anything you want to say.)

Students and teachers were very kind.	18
I was able to communicate with various kinds of people.	12
The program schedule was too tight.	8
I wanted more free time.	8
I really liked Malaysian food.	6
I was able to make a lot of Malaysian friends.	6

Q3. Please write down any other things about the program that you think are worth sharing with us.

I had really valuable experiences.	10
We had too many participants this time.	12
We needed more detailed information on clothing and customs in Malaysia.	4
I really want to come back to UTAR.	4
Some students lacked a sense of intercultural understanding.	2

Note. The numbers in the table are the number of students who shared the same reply.

Q3. Please write down any other things about the program you think that are worth sharing with us.

One of the things that shocked the participants was the strictness of clothing in Malaysia. UTAR management emphasizes the importance of an appropriate dress code for its staff and students. The participants were a little confused about this issue because most of the universities in Japan do not have a dress code.

The results of the survey convey the following two matters. Firstly, the curriculum and instructors really matched the participants' needs even though their motives for participating in the SA program varied. Secondly, not only the curriculum and instructors, but also the supports from various angles, made the SA program richer and more efficient. However, the survey results do not convey how far the participants improved in their linguistic abilities. The improvement in their linguistic knowledge will be discussed in the next section in the report on the outcomes of the students' self-evaluation.

Participants' Self-evaluation

The self-evaluation form was given on the last day of classes. It contained nine questions. The participants were asked to rate their levels of English proficiency, ability, and interest for both pre- and post-participation in the SA program, using a standard 5-point rating scale (1 = "very low" and 5 = "very high"). All 90 participants completed the survey.

Table 5 shows the means and standard deviations of the ratings for each item. A paired-t test was conducted to assess the difference between pre- and post-ratings for each item. Significant differences were found between the pre- and post-ratings for all nine items ($p < .01$). These results suggest that the participants felt their levels of proficiency, ability, and interest significantly improved through the SA program.

Table 5*Results of the Student Self-evaluation*

Variables		Pre	Post	<i>t</i>	<i>P</i>
Communication skills	M	2.20	3.79	16.80	**
	SD	0.94	0.80		
English reading skills	M	2.28	3.56	14.64	**
	SD	0.89	0.72		
English speaking skills	M	1.99	3.56	17.16	**
	SD	0.94	0.95		
English writing skills	M	2.17	3.18	11.28	**
	SD	0.87	0.91		
English listening skills	M	2.20	3.82	16.99	**
	SD	0.98	0.90		
Overall English language proficiency	M	2.16	3.46	15.30	**
	SD	0.84	0.83		
Interest in English	M	2.71	4.22	14.46	**
	SD	1.21	0.82		
Ability to express ideas/thoughts in English	M	2.19	3.42	14.29	**
	SD	0.95	0.81		
Presentation skills	M	2.00	3.20	12.18	**
	SD	0.93	1.10		

** = $p < .01$

Instructor Interview

Eight out of ten instructors were interviewed about their perceptions of students' improvement or changes after attending the SA program. The transcripts from the instructors' interviews were then analyzed. Two overarching themes regarding changes in the participants' attitude and abilities after participating in the SA program emerged from the data. These themes are listed and explained below.

Change in learning attitude. The instructors gave very positive comments on the students' learning attitudes. According to the instructors, the SA participants were very positive about their learning from the beginning of the program and had clear

aims. They were also aware of the importance of learning English. For example, one of the interview questions was “How were the participants’ motivation and attitudes towards learning English at the initial stage of the program?” In response, most of the instructors felt that the participants were strongly motivated to learn the target language. Examples 1 and 2 are responses from two instructors. (The names have been changed.)

Example 1: Chin, female instructor: “This group of Japanese students in my class had very good intentions for learning. They had strong motivation since the beginning of the program. I recall that they always had their digital dictionaries, using them to translate Japanese words into English or to check the meaning of unfamiliar words. They also jotted down everything that we wrote on the board, worrying that they might miss important things.”

Example 2: Lim, male instructor: “Most of them were really diligent. They tried very hard to comprehend every single word that we said even though it was hard for them. And they were very excited when they were exposed to new things.”

Over the course of the two-week program, the instructors observed some positive changes in the students’ attitudes. These changes are listed and discussed below.

(a) Automatic use of language. First, the participants became more willing to communicate in English. Responses from two instructors concerning the question “Over the course of the program, did you see any changes in the participants’ learning attitude?” are presented in Examples 3 and 4.

Example 3: Lim, male instructor: “Initially, when they were required to respond to questions, they looked at each other, expecting someone to explain the answer to them. But, slowly, I noticed that they started to check their understanding by asking us questions in English. They even corrected our wrong pronunciation of some Japanese words like “sushi.” They started using short phrases to communicate with us automatically without expecting anyone to help them to translate.”

Example 4: Gooi, male instructor: Towards the second week, instead of us approaching them, they started approaching us, and they used English

throughout the conversation.

(b) Reduced Anxiety. The students' anxiety about communicating in English was reduced. They became more comfortable using English to communicate, especially with the locals. In response to the question "Over the course of the program, did you see any changes in the participants' learning attitude?" many instructors expressed their contentment with the great extent to which anxiety was reduced among the participants. Responses concerning the question are presented in Examples 5 and 6.

Example 5: Chin, female instructor: I was happy to notice my students became braver about speaking in front of an audience. At the beginning, when we needed to select students to present ideas in front of the class, no one was willing to come to the front. However, after we had carried out more activities like this, they became braver and less anxious about speaking in front of their classmates.

Example 6: Gooi, male instructor: At the beginning, they were so scared, and they always had their dictionaries. But, after that, they slowly became less nervous about making mistakes. They started to accept that making mistakes is part of learning, and they realized that they had to try more instead of only depending on their dictionaries.

Improvement in English language proficiency. When the instructors were asked about their first impression of the participants' language proficiency at the initial stage of the program, all of them stated that the participants were rather weak in the language, especially in speaking. Two responses from the instructors concerning the question "What was your first impression of the participants' language proficiency?" are shown in Examples 7 and 8.

Example 7: Lim, male instructor: Some of them were actually quite weak, especially in listening. I can still remember that in the first lesson, we tried very hard to explain to them that we need to elect a class leader. We used drawing, actions, and role-playing to make them understand the meaning of a word at times.

Example 8: Siow, female instructor: Some students were able to cope, but most of them had trouble. During the self-introduction for instance, we had to

repeat the instructions a few times for some students before they understood what we wanted them to do.

After the two-week SA program, the instructors noticed a clear improvement in the students' English language proficiency. The improvements in terms of different language skills, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing, are listed and discussed below.

(a) Listening skills. All the instructors pointed out that there was a clear improvement in the participants' listening skills after they completed the program. The participants could understand their instructors better in the second week, and the instructors did not need to take as much time explaining instructions or clarifying the meaning of words. Responses concerning the question "Over the course of the program, did you see any improvement in participants' English language proficiency?" are presented in Examples 9 and 10.

Example 9: Chan, female instructor: Initially, when we talked to them, they needed to discuss among themselves using Japanese before responding to our questions. They spent a longer time to understand meanings. But, slowly, I noticed that when we gave them instructions, they seemed able to understand us faster.

Example 10: Shan, male instructor: At the very beginning, giving instructions was really hard. We had to use a lot of drawings and hand gestures. We were actually dramatizing the instruction. Towards the second week, less of that was needed. We could just say things, and they could actually understand us.

(b) Speaking skills. Apart from the improvement in listening skills, instructors also mentioned the noticeable improvement in participants' speaking skills as the program progressed. The participants showed an improvement in their ability to express their ideas, feelings, and thoughts in English. The instructors' responses to the question "Over the course of the program, did you see any improvement in participants' English language proficiency?" are presented below in Examples 11 and 12.

Example 11: Liz, female instructor: Their fluency was definitely better than before. They were not that afraid to try to speak anymore. They were able to

utter sentences, at least, instead of only words.

Example 12: Ren, male instructor: Their improvement in speaking skills is obvious. It was like from zero to a level where they started to utter some simple sentences.

(c) Reading and writing skills. Most of the instructors felt that there was very limited noticeable improvement in the students' reading and writing skills. In response to the question "Over the course of the program, did you see any improvement in participants' English language proficiency?" most of the instructors stated that the participants had already achieved an acceptable level of reading skills prior to the program. The participants were generally weak in writing skills, and an improvement in either reading or writing skills was not apparent. Examples 13 and 14 are responses from the instructors.

Example 13: Chin, female instructor: Generally, students were able to read at the beginning of the program. However, they could not really write. We did not place too much emphasis on writing in the class.

Example 14: Chan, female instructor: Not much improvement in reading and writing skills. Or, at least, it was not as obvious as the improvement in listening and speaking skills.

In summary, the teachers' interviews attested two things. First, the students improved their listening and speaking skills, a finding that matched the results of the students' self-evaluation. However, regarding reading and writing skills, the results of the teacher interviews did not match those of the students' self-evaluation. This will be discussed in the next section.

Discussion and Conclusion

The primary goal of this study is to investigate whether the SA program based on CLT and EIL in Malaysia yields significant changes in the linguistic and non-linguistic abilities of Japanese FL students whose motives for participation and language proficiency vary. This study stresses the importance of student-centeredness, which is the key concept underlying both CLT and EIL. A curriculum

was created for the SA program based on the student-centered model. The reason for this was twofold: First, Japanese FL students who participated in this study lacked self-confidence in engaging in tasks in English, and they had only limited exposure to the contexts where English was the medium. In other words, they needed to experience repeated acceptance from other English speakers to develop their self-confidence in using English. In CLT classrooms, one of the instructors' significant roles is to promote students' self-confidence to use English by accepting or trying to understand what students mean. The second reason for use of the student-centered approach is that students need to be aware of the significance of their own culture and develop attitudes to use their knowledge of their own culture to promote a sense of global understanding (McKay, 2000; 2003).

This study examined changes in linguistic and non-linguistic ability by answering the two research questions. To answer the research questions, this study analyzed data from students' self-evaluations, questionnaires, and interviews with instructors. The following are the answers to the two research questions obtained through this study.

RQ1. Does the study abroad program based on the CLT and EIL approach change the participants' learning attitude?

The answer to this question is "yes," according to the results of the survey, questionnaire, and teacher interviews. In the results of the students' self-evaluation ("Interest in English language" and "Ability to express ideas/thoughts in English"), significant differences were found between pre-and post-ratings ($p < .01$). The results of the survey and teacher interviews supported this finding.

RQ2. Does the study abroad program based on the CLT and EIL approach improve the participants' English language proficiency?

The answer to this research question is "yes" and "no." According to the results of the students' self-evaluation, ("Communication skills," "English reading skills," "English speaking skills," "English writing skills," and "English speaking skills"), there were significant differences between pre- and post- ratings ($p < .01$). In terms of oracy (listening and speaking), the results of the students' self-evaluation accorded with those of the instructor interviews. However, this was not the case for reading and writing skills. That is, significant improvements were recognized only for listening

and speaking skills. The instructor interviews suggested that the students' actual reading and writing skills did not improve as much as the students believed they had. As mentioned in the Results section, the students were already equipped with sufficient literacy skills to participate in the reading and writing activities prior to entering the program. However, more detailed research is necessary to draw conclusions.

In conclusion, this study investigated whether the SA program in multilingual and multicultural contexts actually brings significant linguistic and non-linguistic improvements for Japanese FL students. The results of the study convey that the SA program in this study improved students' oracy skills. However, with regard to the improvement of their literacy skills, further research is necessary to clarify the findings. This study did not include a standardized test such as TOEIC as a dependent variable. To clarify the improvement in literacy skills, future research should include a standardized test as one of the dependent variables and compare the pre- and post-program scores.

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