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DEVELOPING SOCIAL NETWORKS AND LANGUAGE LEARNING:  
JAPANESE ESL STUDENTS IN A STUDY ABROAD CONTEXT

A thesis  
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts  
in the Department of Modern Languages  
The University of Mississippi

by

MICHIYO FUJIMOTO

May 2012

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## ABSTRACT

The current study investigates the relationship between the English language proficiency of Japanese students in a short term study abroad (SA) context and the structure of their social networks. Their personal social networks were investigated through individual interviews. Analyzing their investment in English along with examining their construction of social networks, the purpose of this study is to investigate if there are any relationships between their type of social network and their English proficiency. The data was collected through individual interviews. Their oral English proficiency was evaluated by the Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit (SPEAK) developed by the Educational Testing Services (ETS). The study first showed that the students who had invested their cultural capital or had improved their cultural capital seemed to have had multi social networks, and their final score on the SPEAK test improved. Second, the students who stayed mostly within Japanese social networks had less improvement in their scores than those mentioned above. Third, all three students whose score had negative growth were in the group that scored higher than others at the beginning of the semester. There were two students whose social networks were close-knit among Japanese, yet their score showed the most improvement. Therefore, the result indicated that there probably was a relationship between English language proficiency of Japanese students in a short-term SA context and the structure of their social networks. The further research may be needed to capture such relationship.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

*Kokusaika* (internationalization) became a leading discourse as Japan expanded its economic power in the 1980s. Kubota (2002) describes that the discourse of *kokusaika* has emphasized teaching and learning a foreign language, especially English. Fostering the ability to express oneself in the imagined international community is one of its visions. The notion that English is the international language and that learning English is useful for international communication led the equation between ‘foreign language’ and ‘English’ (Kubota, 2002).

The number of Japanese students who studied abroad in the United States in the academic year of 2011 was 21,290; this was a decrease of 14.3% from the previous year, ranking Japanese 7th compared to other nationalities who studied abroad in the U.S. However, in terms of the field of study, Japanese students had outnumbered all other nationalities in IEPs (Intensive English Programs) for 20 years until 2005. Then in the years of 2005-2008 Japan was ranked second, and in the year 2009 Japan was fourth in rank (Institute of International Education Open Door, 2011). The top five reasons for Japanese<sup>1</sup> studying at universities in the U.S. were 1) to acquire an international mind (*kokusaika* oneself) and to broaden one’s horizons, 2) to improve one’s English ability, 3) to gain experience by studying at American universities, 4) to construct social networks with various types of people, and 5) to later utilize their study-abroad experience when looking for employment (Motivation Survey 2010, Fulbright Japan). The student

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<sup>1</sup> The survey was taken by the 969 Japanese who used the study-abroad information services at the Japan-U.S. Fulbright Center from 2009 to 2010.

participants in the current study also mentioned these reasons for coming to the U.S. to study at the IEP in their interviews.

Observation of students on a typical day at the IEP reveals that students who share a common language when mingling together are inclined to refrain from using English, despite the necessity of using English as the international language to interact among the international community. There is not much oral practice and learning unless language learners find speakers of the L2 who agree to communicate with them. The learners' personal social networks are one of the principal ways such speakers are found.

The current study investigates the relationship between the English language proficiency of Japanese students in a short-term study abroad (SA) context and the structure of their social networks. Their personal social networks were investigated through individual interviews. I employ Milroy's (1987a) definition of social networks as "the informal social relationships contracted by an individual" (p.178). Milroy maintains that the individuals' social networks are constructed with the speaker's complex and varied identities in a relationship with others. It is best not to assume that the students lack motivation because they have very little access to native speakers. The notion of investment (Norton, 2000; Norton Peirce, 1995) is more applicable to explain how each student constructs and develops their social networks with their investment in the target language. The students' identities are constantly changing during their SA term. Norton (2000) argues that investing in the target language is also an investment in a learner's own identity. Analyzing their investment in English and also examining their construction of social networks, the purpose of the study is to investigate if there are any relationships between their type of social network and their English proficiency while data was collected by the

individual interview, and their oral English proficiency tested with the Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit (SPEAK) developed by the Educational Testing Services (ETS).

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### *Investment*

Norton points out that in the past, motivation<sup>2</sup> in SLA theory has often been conceived of as a fixed personal trait, and this notion does not adequately capture the complex relationship among power, identity and language learning that she examines in her studies of immigrant women (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000). The concept of investment introduced in Norton (2000) is defined as “the socially and historically constructed relationship of learners to the target language, and their often ambivalent desire to learn and practice it” (p.10). The participants in Norton’s study were highly motivated to learn English and wished to have more social contact with native speakers. However, they were under particular social conditions that may have blocked their access to opportunities to use the L2. According to Norton, it is not sufficient to say that a language learner is motivated or unmotivated to speak L2. To criticize a learner for his or her lack of motivation may misguide the learner. She notes in her study that the learner’s motivation to speak was mediated by investments and that these investments sometimes conflicted with the desire to speak. Language learners have a complex social history and multiple desires. She proposes the notion of investment instead of motivation. “An investment in the target language is also an investment in a learner’s own identity, and identity which is constantly

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<sup>2</sup> There are two types of motivation; instrumental and integrative motivation. Instrumental motivation is explained when the learner’s purpose of studying a language reflects a more utilitarian value, such as focusing on one’s professional growth, whereas integrative motivation is when the learner is willing to learn more about the other cultural community in order to be a potential member of the group (Gardner, 1972).

changing across time and space” (Norton, 2000, p.11). When the language learners speak the target language, they are negotiating who they are and reconstructing their relationships throughout the social world.

Norton (2000) conducted a year-long, ethnographic study of the identities and L2 investment of five immigrant women learning English in Canada. As a result of this study, Norton found that the learners’ “investment in English and their opportunities to practice English must be understood in the context of their changing identities across historical time and social space” (p. 107). According to Norton, “SLA theorists have struggled to conceptualize the relationship between the language learner and the social world because they have not developed a comprehensive theory of identity that integrates the language learner and the language learning context” (p.4). Norton suggests that it is necessary to understand what investment the learners have in the target language. Furthermore, these investments must be understood as they play a complex role in the ongoing construction of the language learners’ social identity. The concept of investment promotes an understanding of a language learner as a dynamic identity rather than merely a learner with a fixed motivation.

The various studies were conducted employing the notion of investment (McKay & Wong, 1996; Gao, Cheng, & Kelly, 2008; Trent, 2008; Gu, 2008). The participants in these studies were all students, whose roles in their social world were different from the roles of the adult immigrants in Norton’s study. Adult immigrant women have their interaction with co-workers, landlords, government bureaucrats, and so on, and have responsibility to their families. In order to practice English, it is necessary to become a part of the social network within their workplace, or form social relationships with their co-workers.

For example, Eva, one of Norton’s participants had to have command of English to gain

access to social networks. Gradually Eva developed confidence and entered the social network at work. Eva's investment was to gain interactions with her co-workers in order to seek entry into their social networks. Norton (2000) states that because Eva gained the opportunities to practice English on a regular basis in the social networks at work, she became a proficient speaker of English. Eva says that "the most important English teacher for her was 'real life' (p.73).

On the other hand, student participants do not deal with 'real life' to the same extent as adult immigrant women. However, their lives still involve complex tasks. They pay attention to their relationships with teachers and peers, establish ethnic/cultural identities, meet parental demands, respond to gender expectations and perform academically (McKay & Wong, 1996). It is necessary to understand that learners are extremely complex social beings. McKay and Wong shed light on four skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and pointed out that learners value these skills differently depending on their identities as well as their social and academic demands. Learners' investment in English must be understood in terms of their reasons for learning the target language, their needs and their desires.

Gao, Cheng, and Kelly (2008) focused on Chinese research students from mainland China at a university in Hong Kong. The students had aspirations of learning English and expected to have more opportunities to practice English because Hong Kong used to be a British colony, and English is one of its official languages. Furthermore, the university uses English as the medium of instruction. In fact, the students were disappointed by the lack of opportunities to speak English. Their social networks were mostly with other postgraduates from the Chinese mainland and just a few English speakers. These insufficient practice opportunities led them to create the English Club where they could satisfy their desire for greater speaking competence, which later led them to establish a sense of "ownership of English". The "English Club" created

by the students could be understood best with the concept of investment that Norton suggested.

Trent (2008), on the other hand, focused only on the classroom experiences of Hong Kong Chinese students, whose mother tongue was Cantonese, as they studied at an English medium of instruction (EMI) institution in Hong Kong. They enrolled in the Bachelor of Economics and Finance degree program. Trent investigated their in-class participation drawing upon particular resources to enable their own individual investments in classroom. His study suggests that two factors influence oral practices, “knowledge and expertise” and “freedom and control”. The students used the disciplinary knowledge which had created spaces for them as competent English speakers in their chosen fields. The students gained “ownership of English” in the English for Academic Communication classroom rather than in the regular Economics classroom, where teachers had greater disciplinary knowledge than the students. The students also felt much more independent when they could make their own decisions in relation to what they discussed, with limited control and approach from their teachers.

Gu (2008) is concerned with the unique position of English language in Chinese society. The participants in Gu’s research were rural mainland Chinese students who had a great value on a Chinese educated urban community and an English-speaking Christian community. The more powerful Chinese networks are the learners’ imagined communities. Gu (2008) revealed that the learners’ investment had developed in a spiral process as follows:

An imagined community invites an imagined identity, and the investment in the imagined identity results in participation in specific English-related activities. The practice in activities which might bring people closer to their initial imagined community provides opportunities of meeting more people, gaining more information, knowledge and

experiences. The initial imagined community is reexamined and reframed based on the emergent structures arising from learners' participations, and new imagined identities are thus formed. Therefore, the process is circularly evolving, following different tracks (p.67).

Previous studies have shown the language learners' investment in English under the complex relationship between power, identity, and their different social networks. The multidimensional perspective of previous studies towards the learners in various conditions confirmed that the learners are negotiating who they are and reconstructing the relations with the social world. Thus, their social networks constructed in multitudinous investment, acquiring "a wider range of symbolic and material resources<sup>3</sup>, which will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital" (Norton Peirce, 1995, p.17).

### *Social Network Theory*

Milroy states that "an individual's social network is simply the sum of relationships which he or she has contracted with others, and in that rather obvious sense the concept is universally applicable" (Milroy, 1987b, p.105). Also, Milroy (1987a) defines social network as "the informal social relationships contracted by an individual" (p.178). Social Network Theory, originally developed in the field of social anthropology to explain the variable behavior of individuals, has been used to explain variable linguistic behavior.

Depending on individuals, the structure of their social networks varies. Milroy attempted

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<sup>3</sup> Symbolic resources are resources as language, education, and friendship. Material resources include capital goods, real estate, and money (Norton Peirce, 1995).

to examine the type of interpersonal relationships by looking at individuals' network ties in terms of whom they spend time with and to what capacity (e.g., X might know Y as both a neighbor and as a workmate) (Milroy, 1987a; Milroy, 1987b). Thus, Milroy (1987a) claims that the Social Network Theory (SNT) is "a promising approach to some kind of quantitative statement of what is meant by integration into the community" (p.135).

Milroy (1987a) applied SNT in her study of language use in Belfast, Ireland in the 1970s. Milroy's research was conducted in three working-class communities of Belfast. The study examined the use of eight phonetic variables equated with the local vernacular of 46 participants.

Milroy and Margain (1980) explain that a social network may be seen as a boundless web of ties linking people to one another. However, SNT is not a simple metaphorical device to describe social relationships but rather an analytic tool. Furthermore, Milroy's research examined individual relationships among people and integration into the community to explain the speakers' linguistic behavior.

Milroy examined individuals in small groups rather than identifying or defining people in terms of their social classes. Milroy and Margain (1980) note that social class is basically focused on large-scale social, political, and economic structures and processes while social networks connect to the community and interpersonal level of social organization. The research investigated the vague but important notion of 'integration into the community' (p.2).

Milroy's research investigated the capacity of a particular kind of network that acts as a norm enforcement mechanism. A relatively dense multiplex network structure (close-knit) has the capacity to impose linguistic norms upon the members of the network. Density (dense) refers to the amount of interaction between the members of an individual's networks. Multiplexity (multiplex) is the content characteristics of networks. If the connections consist of more than one

connection or tie with the same individual, such as a relative, a co-worker, or a church member, then they are called multiplex. This speaker's degree of integration into his or her close-knit community generally measures how close his or her vernacular norms are to the community (Milroy, 1987a; Milroy and Milroy, 1985).

Furthermore, a speaker at the center of a norm enforcement group (close-knit) has fewer opportunities to be exposed to outside influences because of the investment of time and commitment to his or her strong ties. On the other hand, a speaker with loose-knit networks is relatively more exposed to "the influence of a prestige norm" (Milroy, 1987a; Milroy and Milroy, 1985).

In her Belfast study, Milroy observed that some informants avoided close ties with the local community because they considered them non-beneficial for their own social advancement. A preference for status over solidarity was observed in this case.

Given this observation, Milroy argues that an individual's social behavior varies depending on a clear tension between status and solidarity. Milroy (1987a) states that "these two ideologies are likely to be symbolized by divergent sets of linguistic norms. Each individual is able, to some extent, to show by his choice of language how he has reconciled the two" (p.212).

At last, Milroy (1987a) notes that although it is clear that many factors influence the structure of individuals' social networks (for example, territorial stability, location of work and kin, age, sex, personal affinity, attitudes to the vernacular culture, status and solidarity), it is hard to identify and measure all relevant factors. Additionally, the amount of participation an individual has in a close-knit network was also found to correlate with the individual's use of the vernacular speech norms of that network.

Kurata (2011) explains that SNT has been used predominantly in linguistics to describe the linguistic behavior of networks of speakers. However, the application of SNT in SLA research has received little attention. Some such studies do exist, and they consider the relationship between language learners' social networks and their language learning.

For example, recent studies that used SNT as an analytical framework to investigate speakers' language use include Matsumoto's study (2010) of the rural post-colonial multilingual island community of Palau, and Stoessel's study (2002) of immigrant women in the U.S. Both studies concentrated on speakers' language choices, maintenance and shift. Furthermore, the results of both studies indicated that close-knit social networks played an important role in influencing speakers' linguistic behavior. Matsumoto (2010) explored the correlations between the use of the former colonial languages, Japanese and English, the indigenous language, and the islanders' social network ties. The result showed a significant correlation: the more Japanese-oriented ties the subjects had in their social networks, the more likely they were to use Japanese. In addition, Matsumoto investigated the relationship between their English proficiency and their language use. The result showed that the lower proficiency of English the subjects had, the less English they had used. Stoessel (2002) explored the relationship between subjects' frequency of use of L1 and L2 and their social networks. Stoessel stated that in spite of their living situation (e.g., married English-speaking American men and living in the U.S.), subjects who had a multiplex social network with an L1 speaker in the community maintained their L1. Furthermore, Stoessel notes the emotional attachment to L1; subjects who had negative emotions towards to their L1 tended to lose their L1, and vice versa.

Second, Wiklund (2002) and Isabelli-Gracia (2006), among others, conducted studies dealing with L2 learning within the learners' social networks. Wiklund (2002) used SNT to

assess network characteristics and examine to what extent social networks correlate to the development of Swedish L2 proficiency of immigrant students in Sweden and their school success. The study demonstrated that differences in network orientation affect L2 proficiency. Wiklund then argues that more extensive studies may be needed to confirm these tendencies, resulting in a better understanding of the role of social networks as well as the role of school and classroom activities to enhance social network effects in the development of L2 proficiency.

Isabelli-Gracia (2006) examined the development of oral communication skills and accuracy by analyzing participants' social networks in terms of motivation, contact with the host culture outside of the classroom, and attitudes towards the host culture. The learners who maintained an integrative motivation and aligned themselves to the new culture had more extended networks and displayed larger gains in linguistic accuracy. The social networks comprised of NS of the target language expanded the opportunities of interaction and greatly enhanced their language skills. Finally, Isabelli-Gracia suggested that it is important that SA organizations place students carefully in host families, know L2 learners' goals when recruiting them, and provide programs that allow them to successfully create social networks.

So far the notion of SNT, how it is used in sociolinguistic studies, and its applications in SLA research have been explained. Murray (1993) and Türker (1995) both point out some discrepancies of SNT as an analytic tool for linguistic variation. However, Murray cautions against discarding SNT and states that SLA is a field in which it may be useful to current research. This builds upon the notion that language is influenced by a speaker's community. First, Murray questioned Milroy's network scales. Because Milroy's scales were arbitrary, the linguistics data and networks in the Belfast study were not statistically significant.

On the other hand, Türker (1995) states that basically SNT can reveal an individual's informal relationship with his or her community and linguistic behavior through investigating an individual's social networks; however, SNT falls short in explaining this because it does not take the individual's linguistic variation into consideration.

Türker argues that SNT fails to explain some cases like the effects of bilingualism within a social network, although it is useful for community studies such as immigrant groups, and various communities in urban settings. Furthermore, Türker criticizes early uses of SNT in sociolinguistics, such as Milroy's Belfast study, which is a quantitative study and does not look at "the dynamics of conversation" (p. 63). Türker claims that SNT is not adequate for measuring or examining language use, language acquisition, and language choice since it does not consider an individual's language development nor his or her socialization process.

SNT does not have sufficient examination in terms of individual differences such as personality, cognitive processes, and interests. In Türker's study, one individual was interested in language learning, but the other was not. These individual differences are not taken into account in SNT because of the synchronic perspective as mentioned above. In the current study, these individual differences are best to be understood with the notion of investment in the target community and language. Employing Milroy's (1987a) definition of social networks as "the informal social relationships contracted by an individual" (p.178) and her approach of assessing the individual social networks, the notion of investment assists to investigate how the each participant's social networks was constructed and had changed. Consequently, the relationship between their English language proficiency and the structure of their social networks is examined.

### CHAPTER III

#### RESEARCH QUESTION

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between the English language proficiency of Japanese students in a short-term SA context and the structure of their social networks.

Investigating the learners' social networks leads researchers to discover their integration into the community' (Milroy and Margain, 1980, p.2). Social network theory allows for the investigation of the social binds with regard to whom and to what level the learners have gained access (Milroy, 1987a; Milroy, 1987b). Milroy (1987b) claims that the social network is the sum of relationships which individuals have constructed with others. Among their social networks that include relationships with others, identities are established to be complex and varied.

As can be seen in the literature, Murray (1993) and Türker (1995) argue that using SNT as an analytic tool has some discrepancies, such as inconsistency of network scales in a quantitative study due to its lack of consideration of an individual language development and socialization process.

Consolidating both Murray and Türker, SNT may have potential as an analytical tool for SLA with qualitative studies of individuals rather than traditional quantitative studies.

Investigating individuals' interests over their language development and socialization processes and by what type of norms the learners may be affected may be needed in order to analyze the data from a diachronic point of view.

Norton (Norton Peirce, 1995; Norton, 2000) argues for the necessity of a comprehensive

theory of identity that integrates language learners and the language learning context. Norton points out that motivation in SLA theory has been conceived of as a fixed personal trait, and this notion does not capture the complex relationship among power, identity, and language learning. She suggests the concept of investment, which allows one to examine the learners' identity. This identity is "constantly changing across time and space" (Norton, 2000, p.11).

As discussed in the literature of Social Network Theory, there are studies that used SNT as an analytical framework to investigate speakers' language use (Matsumoto, 2010; Stoessel, 2002). There are also some studies which were interested in the correlations between the characteristics of social networks and L2 proficiency (Wiklund, 2002; Isabelli-Gracia, 2006). However, these are either quantitative studies or a combination of quantitative and qualitative studies which fail to address the speakers' or learners' investment in the community over time.

Upon reviewing the literature, analyzing the participants qualitatively in the current study with a framework based on SNT which is extended to consider learners' dynamic identities and their investment in the target community was determined to be sufficient.

Furthermore, Norton's research and other studies in the literature are focused on the natural or informal environment of the target language community, which is where one is surrounded by fluent speakers of the target language (Spolsky, 1989). Even though the study finds that the participants are not totally surrounded by the target language even outside the classroom, I take the position that holistically considers the participants' social networks both inside and outside the classroom as they existed in a SA context.

The following research question is the focus of this study: what is the relationship, if any, between the English language proficiency of Japanese students in a short-term study abroad context and the structures of their social networks?

Accordingly, there are some sub-questions for this research. In terms of English language proficiency, what was their initial and final English proficiency and was there any change? In terms of the social networks, what was the structure of their social networks at the beginning and the end of the term?

## CHAPTER IV

### METHODOLOGY

This study explored the relationship among English language proficiency and social networks from the observations and interviews of 19 Japanese ESL students in a short term SA context. First, the individual interviews were conducted and analyzed for qualitative information about the participants' social networks. Because I was working for IEP as a graduate assistant, I met these participants at the airport on the first day, assisted them in the process of acculturating into their new environment, and participated in IEP-hosted activities and other school activities. I had plenty of opportunities to interact with them. Of course, talking to them in Japanese and sharing the culture (e.g., food, music, and entertainment) enabled me to observe them closely as a friend as well. Second, the Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit (SPEAK) Test by the Educational Testing Service (ETS) was used as baseline data for their oral proficiency in English. This test was administered upon their arrival to the university. Finally, interview data and participants' English proficiency were examined to explore any relationship between the characteristics of their social networks and their language proficiency.

#### *Participants*

The participants in this study were 19 Japanese students, 13 female (68%) and 6 male (32%), who volunteered to join this study. Participants came from three different universities in Japan and chose to study in an Intensive English Program (IEP) at a university in the southeastern United States for approximately four months during the fall semester. The age range of the participants was 19 to 22 years old.

Most of the students enrolled in the program with total financial support from their parents. Some students relied on personal savings as well as their parents' financial aid. One student paid the program fee (including the air tickets and the cost of living) by himself.

Nine out of 19 students had never spent time outside of Japan, while another 9 students had experienced previous short term stays either in an SA program or traveling on their own to English-speaking countries such as Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, or the U.S. for periods ranging from one week to one month. Additionally, one student had lived in Bahrain for 3 years. Participants were separated into different class levels at IEP according to their initial English proficiency in listening and speaking, reading, writing, and grammar as assessed by two standardized tests: SPEAK and the Michigan Test. Alternate versions of the same assessment were given at the end of the semester prior to their departure.

### *Context*

At the time of data collection, all students were enrolled in 18 hours of intensive English instruction per week, and they had weekends free. Participants had to attend two compulsory events, a welcome dinner and a farewell dinner, and had the option to attend 10 to 12 planned events open to all IEP students. There was no particular English-language-only policy within the IEP department; however, students were encouraged to use English as a lingua franca to communicate with IEP students from different countries who did not speak the same language. They were placed in the five different levels of classes according to their pre-SPEAK Test results. The classes were: (a) beginning, (b) intermediate, (c) high intermediate, (d) advanced, and (e) advanced-plus. Most of the students were living in campus dormitories in a shared room with a roommate and had a meal pass which they could use at the school cafeterias. None of them had a car, and as a result, they had to use public transportation or seek a ride to go off campus to do

things such as getting groceries, going shopping, or socializing at a friend's house.

### *Data Collection*

#### *Interviews*

In order to answer the research question, I conducted semi-structured interviews with each participant in one of the IEP classrooms. The interview was either in English, Japanese, or a combination of English and Japanese, depending upon what the participants felt most comfortable with or were willing to use. Each participant was interviewed for approximately 30 minutes, including some casual conversation. I had established rapport with the students through participating in IEP-hosted social functions and working as a graduate assistant at IEP and was able to observe the participants closely to ensure the reliability of their self-reported social networks. A brief introduction about the research project was given to all the informants, and the interviews were audio-recorded with the informants' permission. To ensure privacy and anonymity, this interview was not perceived as an English test of any sort and was not listened to by anyone except the researcher. The informants' names would not be mentioned, but pseudonyms were used instead with their permission. Pseudonyms were used in the place of the participants' actual names. I explained to each informant that I was interested in finding out with whom he or she meets and speaks in English and Japanese. I made it clear to the informants what kind of social interactions I was interested in: (a) active networks, (b) ones with people whom the informants actually meet face-to-face and/or (c) regularly talked with, wrote to, or chatted with through the media in real-time. I explained to them not to include the people who just said, "Hi/Hey" or often times only, "How are you?" on the streets, but instead people with whom they shared substantive conversations. Participants were asked to exclude people whom they knew

through media like Facebook, Skype, and email address books, but whom they don't regularly interact. The information received was solely dependent on the informants' self-report given during the interviews.

I asked eight sets of questions, each containing several specific open-ended questions as stimulus questions followed by possible derivative questions, covering the following areas: (a) leisure and spare time, (b) dining, (c) living and housing, (d) school and classes, (e) general relationships, (f) long distance relationships, (g) relationships through media, and (h) other general questions about themselves. An interview protocol may be found in Appendix. Questions about long distance relationships and relationships through media were also included, with the assumption that their media mediated social networks were associated with long distance relationships such as with their families and friends in Japan. All the participants joined or had been active on Facebook; however, interactions on Facebook were not considered in this study unless these interactions were used as email or chat.

Interview data was analyzed by the author, a native speaker of Japanese, and a learner of English as L2. As a result, most of the interviews were administered in Japanese. A few students preferred to respond in English to the questions that were asked in English. However, some participants responded in Japanese. Many of them answered in both English and Japanese depending on the questions or situations. Their comments were translated into English if they had answered in Japanese.

### *English Proficiency*

The IEP assessed participants using the Speaking Proficiency English Assessment Kit (SPEAK) Test in the beginning and the end of the semester. The SPEAK test was developed by Educational Testing Service (ETS) to provide institutions with a valid and reliable instrument for

assessing the spoken English of NNSs. ETS suggests that “SPEAK test results can be used to evaluate the speaking proficiency of applicants for teaching assistantships who are not native speakers of English, to measure improvement in speaking proficiency over a period of time, or to identify teaching assistants and others who may need additional instruction in English” (ETS, 1997). The participants in this study took a modified version of the SPEAK test. Most of the participants took the SPEAK test for initial placement in IEP classes one day after they had arrived in the U.S. The second version of the test was given during a week prior to a final exam week, approximately four months after they had arrived in the U.S., to assess short-term language acquisition. The test was administered by two instructors and lasted approximately 10 minutes. To minimize challenges to test validity, instructors were not allowed to assess their own students when the second version of the test was administered at the end of the semester. Test-takers were given a test-booklet with questions that the instructors would ask orally. Participants orally answered 7 questions in all after answering some warm-up questions, such as “What is the weather like today?” Assessments were designed considering the following categories: functional competence, sociolinguistic competence, discourse competence, and linguistic competence. The each answer was rated on a ten-point score scale ranging from a low score of 20 to a high score of 60. The individual’s test score was calculated by averaging the two scores awarded by the IEP instructors. Descriptions of the abilities at each 10-point score level may be found in Table 1.

Table 1  
*SPEAK Rating Scale*

Score	Description of Abilities
60	Communication almost always effective: task performed very competently Functions performed clearly and effectively Appropriate response to audience/situation Coherent, with effective use of cohesive devices Use of linguistic features almost always effective; communication not affected by minor errors
50	Communication generally effective: task performed competently Functions generally performed clearly and effectively Generally appropriate response to audience/situation Coherent, with some effective use of cohesive devices Use of linguistic features generally effective; communication generally not affected by errors
40	Communication somewhat effective: task performed somewhat competently Functions performed somewhat clearly and effectively Somewhat appropriate response to audience/situation Somewhat coherent, with some use of cohesive devices Use of linguistic features somewhat effective; communication sometimes affected by errors
30	Communication generally not effective: task generally performed poorly Functions generally performed unclearly and ineffectively Generally inappropriate response to audience/situation Generally incoherent, with little use of cohesive devices Use of linguistic features generally poor; communication often impeded by major errors
20	No effective communication: no evidence of ability to perform task No evidence that functions were performed No evidence of ability to respond appropriately to audience/situation Incoherent, with no use of cohesive devices Use of linguistic features poor; communication ineffective due to major errors

*Note: Information gathered from Education Testing Service (ETS, 1996)*

The IEP usually divides the results into the following levels: Beginning (20-29), Intermediate (30-34), High Intermediate (35-39), Advanced (40-44), and Advanced-Plus (45 or above). These are only general, fluid guidelines. Cut-off points may vary from semester to semester, depending

upon a variety of factors including student enrollment, score clusters, logistics, etc. In this study, the participants took the second version of the SPEAK post-test at approximately the same time that the interview data was collected. With the permission of the IEP program, English proficiency data of participants was collected. This study uses the SPEAK test scores to see where the participants started, how much they improved, and where they ended up as a general view of their English proficiency.

I would like to examine how specific participants' network involvement may have impacted their SPEAK post-test scores. In order to find out the relationship, if any, between English language proficiency and the structure of their social networks, it is coherent to examine students who are closer in level in terms of their pre-test score. The level of classes they attended at school was determined, in part, by their SPEAK pre-test score. Thus, students who scored within the same level on the SPEAK pre-test were together at least during class time. I would like to consider the classroom as a part of their social network during their SA.

Table 1.2

*Informants' Information and SPEAK Test Scores*

False Name	Age	Sex	Previous SA Experience	Room mate	SPEAK Test			
					Pre	Post	post-pre	%
Ai	20	F	1st time	JPN	20.0	26.4	6.4	132.0
Kentaro	20	M	1st time	NS	20.7	32.1	11.4	155.1
Manabu	20	M	1st time	JPN	21.4	42.1	20.7	196.7
Misa	20	F	1st time	NNS	21.4	25.7	4.3	120.1
Kyoko	20	F	1st time	JPN	22.9	33.6	10.7	146.7
Chika	19	F	1 mo.	nil	22.9	29.3	6.4	127.9
Saori	21	F	1 mo.	NNS	26.4	29.3	2.9	111.0
Mihoko	20	F	1st time	NS	26.4	35.7	9.3	135.2
Yoko	21	F	1 mo.	NNS	27.1	37.1	10.0	136.9
Saki	20	F	2 wks.	NS	27.1	32.9	5.8	121.4
Kaori	21	F	2 - 3 wks.	NNS	27.1	36.4	9.3	134.3
Yumi	21	F	10 days	NNS	28.6	37.9	9.3	132.5
Rika	19	F	2 - 3 wks.	NS	29.3	41.4	12.1	141.3
Masaki	22	M	1st time	NNS	32.9	28.6	-4.3	86.9
Kazuki	21	M	2 wks.	JPN	32.9	40.7	7.8	123.7
Asuka	21	F	1st time	NNS	34.3	32.1	-2.2	93.6
Hiroyuki	22	M	1st time	NS	34.3	40.7	6.4	118.7
Shoichi	19	M	1 wk.	NS	35.0	44.3	9.3	126.6
Maki	20	F	(3 yrs.)*	NNS	38.6	37.1	-1.5	96.1

*Note:* In order of low pre-test score to high. \*Maki had three years of living in a non-English speaking country.

## CHAPTER V

### DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULT

In this section I will take a closer look at the participants' social networks and their integration into the community while linking investment in the target language with the structure of their social networks. The interview questions provided a measurement of this aspect of the participants' network structure (Appendix).

Nineteen informants' social networks were investigated through individual interviews. I also carefully examined the informants and asked additional questions to find out if the persons who contacted informants were acting only as means for exchanging goods and services (e.g. "thanks" to a bus driver). I eliminated such people unless the informant had an actual conversation with them regularly. The persons who interacted only through greetings like "Hi/Hey" and "How are you?" were also carefully examined and eliminated.

In addition to the direct face-to-face interactions, I included contact through medial varieties that were currently developing rapidly. For example, Skype calls, chatting through internet media and interacting on social networking sites (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, MySpace, and Mixi<sup>4</sup>) are not extraordinary for participants in between the ages of 19 to 22. The amount of time that they spend on internet media is crucial to the study. In addition, Milroy and Milroy (1992) describe that a social network is a boundless web of ties that reaches out through a whole society, linking people to one another. Some of the informants were observed to have been talking to their family or friends in Japan frequently on Skype. Thus, the ties connected through media

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<sup>4</sup> Mixi is the biggest Japanese social network community site launched in 1994.

technology were taken into account as network ties in this study. Interaction through media was analyzed in the same way as actual face-to-face network ties since this study focused on their speaking and listening proficiency by collecting their SPEAK test scores as measurements. Chatting, emails, and texting were not regarded as being as important as face to face conversations.

In this study, NSs were the native speakers of American English. The NNSs among the informants' social networks were students from various countries. They were studying either at the university or the university's IEP program.

How much English interaction and Japanese interaction they had had was observed. Changes to the structure of their social networks were observed by looking at the amount of interaction they had with others initially compared to the end of the term.

1. According to the interview, Japanese ties were almost exclusively within their IEP group. This means that their social networks among themselves was highly dense, and many of the ties were multiplex. For example, they met often, ate lunch together, went out for parties together, and studied together. This condition was almost the same among those who had the strong Japanese-speaking ties throughout the term.
2. Only 8 informants had media interaction in English (Rika, Yoko, Yumi, Kentaro, Asuka, Kaori, Kazuki, and Mihoko). In other U.S. states, Yoko had an English-speaking boyfriend, and Rika and Yumi had American friends. Asuka, Kaori, and Kazuki had good friends from school with whom they talked by phone or chatted with online. In addition, Kazuki was the only one who had interactions outside campus he spoke with a restaurant manager on the phone to arrange for his friend's birthday. Kentaro had to call or text with his soccer teammates and his coach in order to receive the information about the soccer

games, and some of the teammates became his good friends.

3. As a whole, the informants had more English speakers in their networks collectively than Japanese.
4. 12 out of 19 informants had more English face-to-face networks than that of Japanese.
5. In the media networks, only 2 informants (Yoko and Kentaro) had more English networks. Most informants were found to have been using Skype to talk to their family members and friends in Japan.
6. Six informants had NNS roommates; however, only Hiroyuki became good friends with his roommates. The other five said they did not have much interactions with their roommates. Seven informants had fewer English networks in face-to-face interactions. Four had Japanese roommates or no roommate. Three had NNS roommates but the quality of interaction was little interaction or no interaction.

#### Ai, Manabu, Misa, Kyoko, Chika and Saki

Ai, Manabu, Misa, Kyoko, Chika and Saki were in the same circle of friends. Their pre-scores of the SPEAK test were very similar for except Saki (see Table 1.2). They were hanging out every day and ate lunch and/or dinner together. Ai and Kyoko were roommates. Chika had no roommate for until towards to the end of the semester. Manabu had a Japanese roommate. Their networks were quite small and tight within Japanese friends. Ai, Misa, Kyoko, Chika and Saki traveled together during the Thanksgiving holidays for a week. Manabu also traveled during the Thanksgiving with his Japanese male friends. Except Manabu, all talked to their family and friends in Japan frequently on Skype.

Ai

Ai joined this short-term SA program because of her desire to be able to speak English, which developed after she spent a full summer at a swimming camp in the U.S. during high school. She usually spent time with Kyoko, Chika and Misa, except in the classroom. She had a boyfriend in Japan with whom she talked almost every day on Skype. She also talked on Skype to her mother once a week. Once she started talking to her mother, her talks with her mother would last for about two hours. She had other Japanese friends who were studying in the U.S. Once in a while, she spent time talking to them on Skype. Answering my question, “Do you think your English improved?” she said, “Maybe a little bit. But I don’t have, how do I say, cowardliness anymore against English, both to speak and to listen. Her satisfaction on her SA experience was 60% the reason being that she did not speak as much English as she had expected. She mentioned:

When we are all in a big group, already we are bundled together in a smaller group of friends. From there, it is hard to move out and be friends with someone in a different group. So, it would have been nice if we were already divided into much smaller groups like a class size, and have done smaller sized events.

Kentaro

Kentaro was hoping to study abroad for one academic year; however, his TOEFL score was not high enough to apply for it, so he applied for a short-term SA program. Kentaro started off with a similar score on the pre-test SPEAK as Ai, Manabu, Misa, Kyoko and Chika. He

gained his international acquaintances and a few American students' through joining a soccer team. He hung out with his soccer teammates on campus. He had multiplex ties with them. He was already a good soccer player in Japan and had a desire to play while he was in the U.S. He said:

At the beginning, I didn't like to speak English. (...) I use English when we have a game. I'm totally alone, so I have to speak; otherwise, can't communicate, can't communicate with the coach. He counted on me, more than 90%. I got a position from him.

Referring to the interview question, "How much do you think you speak English a day? (A day is 100%)", he said he used English 100% when it was a tournament day. He appeared to have gained confidence and to have found a place where he could claim his right to speak. He almost never talked to his family, his girlfriend, and friends in Japan on Skype. He stated that English is important. The reason was mentioned as:

English is one of the communication tools. I think the world wouldn't function without English. Furthermore, not only English but also other languages. And, of course, I thought I could learn a communication skill here.

He confidently answered "Yes" to my question, "do you think your English improved?" and said:

First, I couldn't understand (English) at all. I even didn't like to speak English because I couldn't catch the sound, and also didn't like others to think I was strange. But now I can do it a bit better.

## Manabu

Manabu applied for the program because his father persuaded him to participate in order to see the world outside of Japan. He said:

English is not as important as other friends think because we can somewhat find a job without being able to speak English. I would like to see myself grow in different ways, not language, out of my SA experience. I came here to enjoy myself rather than studying English, so I would like to do more (deepen?) a kind of study that we do in the American Culture class. Classes are fun and easy!

Manabu had a multiplex tie with several Japanese friends in the same program. His roommate was Japanese. He spent time with other Japanese students, eating lunch and the occasional dinner together. Manabu played basketball two or three times a week with other IEP students including Koreans, Taiwanese and Japanese and some Americans, and started going out for drinks downtown towards to the end of semester. His pre-test score was fairly low (21.4), but he said that he talked "quite a lot" with one American guy when he lost his way around on the very first football game. This was at the very beginning of the semester. Sometimes he went out to parties with his NS neighbor in the dorm. According to his teacher, he was a very good student in the

class. He spoke up in class and always the high score on tests. He rarely joined the events that IEP or school hosted.

Misa

Misa was mostly spending her time outside the classroom with her Japanese friends. Her good Japanese friends were Kyoko, Chika and Ai. She did not make any good friends who spoke English. She applied to have a language partner, but that person never contacted her. She said that her listening skill improved but not her speaking. She felt she used English about 40% a day. There were no particular IEP or school events or activities in which she used much English. Referring to the question, “at what type or kind of event do you think you would speak more English? Is there any idea or thoughts?” She said, “Nothing special”. She thinks English is important because of employment.

Kyoko

Kyoko is a part of the group of Chika, Ai, and Misa. She joined this program because she wanted to improve her English skill because she would like to be an English teacher in the future. She believes English is important for jobs. Kyoko talked to her family on Skype once a week. Her satisfaction with her SA experience was 40%. She said:

40% because I always hang out with Japanese. I don't even study hard, always playing. My roommate is a Japanese, so this is not good. I think it is not so good to have so many Japanese. To tell the truth, the condition

is as same as when I took native teachers' classes at my university<sup>5</sup> in Japan. If I want to make friends, I have to speak English. But I'm always with Japanese. It would have been nice if there was an eat-out event and we should not sit with the same nationalities. By just telling us to eat together, we, Japanese tend to be with Japanese. Koreans with Koreans. Taiwanese with Taiwanese. So, I now think that the home stay program might have been better for me. I would have to speak English because I would have been the only Japanese among an American family.

#### Chika

Chika decided to participate in the SA program because of her parents' recommendation. Her social network was not only small and tight-knit, but also stable. She liked to spend time with her best Japanese friend in her room. Her best friend usually came to her room to chat, eat, and do homework together. Sometimes she talked to her best friend's roommate who was a Korean. It seemed that classrooms and this Korean girl were the only regular English exposure Chika had. She said:

I have a kind of routine in a day. After school, go out to eat, come back to my room and watch Japanese TV. Then, I get sleepy, so I take a nap, wake up and do my homework and talk to my friend in Japan on Skype or send an email to my mom. Then, it's time to take a shower and go to bed. I spend quite long

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<sup>5</sup> Kyoko's university in Japan is a language school. She has several classes taught by native English speaking teachers.

hours in my room.

She talked to her family five times a week in the morning until she got a roommate. Her routine was to call her family when she woke up. She thought her listening skill had improved since the beginning of the semester. At first she did not understand what her residential assistant (RA) at the dorm said to her, but by the time the interview was conducted, she could understand the RA's English. She seemed to be very satisfied, though she was not satisfied with her SA experience because she used too much Japanese. She thought that even if there were a rule not to speak any mother language at an IEP, students would speak their common language together. She said once her Japanese friends and she tried to speak only English among themselves, but it did not last because they felt uncomfortable and embarrassed at talking each other in English and took a long time just to say something. They ended up talking in Japanese.

Saori

Saori mentioned in English why she chose to come to the U.S.:

Because the English we learn is American English, so I, in my opinion I, we Japanese go to study abroad, they should go to America because American English is native for Japanese.

Saori thinks English is very important for her. She said:

In my opinion, Japan is still an isolated country compared to other countries. And, I think our own idea (opinion) from our culture

is strong. You know there are many who can't speak English (in Japan) even though they have studied for 10 years. Uh, I think we should interact more with the world. English is a standard language, so we should put more stress on learning English.

She was cooking and eating with her Japanese friend almost every day. They shared the food expense because of financial reasons. She was not obligated to be with other Japanese students but mentioned she just could not text American friends to go out for dinner. She thought most of her American friends were too busy and their lifestyles were different from her, which made her feel awkward asking them out for dinner. She used English about 50% of the time in a single day, but on the weekends she used no English. For several weekends she stayed at home, and during this time she did not interact with any English speakers. She had a language partner; however, they scarcely planned and met each other. She had a few American friends whom she could ask for a ride if needed. They were students studying Japanese. She had one good friend from Korea. They had almost all the same classes at IEP. She enjoyed her classes more than she expected. On the other hand, she was struggling with how to communicate with her American and Korean roommates who were taking regular classes. She could not have much interaction with both of them. She thinks her listening skill was improved but not speaking. She said Japanese students cannot help mingling together if there are many of them. She also found it difficult to ask for favors or to insist her own opinion to Americans. One time she lent her cell phone to her American roommate, but it was not returned even after half an hour. She felt hesitant to ask her to return it.

Mihoko

Mihoko had the same pre-test SPEAK score as Saori. Mihoko gained by 35.2 % while Saori gained by 11 %. Mihoko joined the SA program because her English classes at her university in Japan were boring, and she did not like many of her classmates then who were not motivated at all to learn English. It was not pleasant for her. This made her join the program to escape that kind of environment.

Mihoko was eating lunch with her language partner twice a week at the school cafeteria. Her language partners were too busy to meet Mihoko outside the campus afterschool or on weekends. During most weekends, she spent most of her time with Japanese friends. She also made American friends through “Japanese Club” that was held once a month to introduce Japanese culture to American students who were studying Japanese. She said:

Everyone has a different language. If we could speak English,  
we could communicate with each other. English is important for me and fun.  
I used to take English conversation lessons when I was in elementary school.  
I thought learning English was fun. If I could speak English, I could  
communicate with everyone from different countries.

She thought that she spoke English for only 40% per a day, but her listening skill had improved. She is almost 100% satisfied with her SA. She did not like Japanese, including herself, mingling together exclusively all the time.

## Yoko

Yoko's goal for this SA was to avoid feeling tense in front of native speakers of English when she had to speak. She got very nervous when with Americans even though her boyfriend was an American. She had an American boyfriend in another state. Once she started talking to him on Skype, she would talk for over 2 hours, and chatted for 1 hour. Her boyfriend and she spoke English to each other; however, because he spoke Japanese well, they had a tendency to switch to Japanese. She lived in an apartment sharing the kitchen and the living room with three other international students. She said that they did not come out from their room usually, so she did not have much interaction except saying "Hi" in the kitchen. In the classroom, she was trying to use only English, but if the content was too difficult, her Japanese classmates and she switched to speaking in Japanese. She said that she liked to spend time by herself. For example, after school once she came back to her room, she studied, watched movies, read, and ate by herself. She also liked to spend time surfing on the internet. She thinks she only used English 40% a day. She felt stressed not being able to use more English; meanwhile, she claimed that it was her own fault.

## Saki

About a month after Saki arrived in the U.S., she started dating a Korean student who was also attending the IEP. She spent most of her time with him talking in English. She had an American roommate. She did not talk to her except greetings like "good night" and "good morning" She talked with her mother and Japanese friends in Japan two or three times a week on Skype. She thought that her listening ability had definitely improved.

All the classes are taught by native teachers here so I really have to concentrate on listening to what they say. Of course, being with my boyfriend has a good effect. I still think English (listening) is quite difficult, more than I expected because of the “R” pronunciation and the dialect. Pronunciation is difficult but not in all classes. When I was at my university in Japan, I had a native speaker as my teacher and his class was quite hard, so when I came here, I thought the classes were not as tough as I expected, rather easy.

She seemed to be very happy and confident about her improvement in English, being able to listen and understand more than before she came. Saki thinks she uses English 60% a day while Ai, Misa, Kyoko and Chika said 40%, and Manabu said only 20%. She thinks she used English more because she dated a Korean boyfriend.

#### Kaori and Yumi

The approach of both Kaori and Yumi towards the community was very different from other students. Both of them did not want to be by themselves. They tried to be with someone as much as possible. Their networks were multiplex and highly dense.

#### Kaori

Kaori brought in more ‘friends of friends’ into her first order zone (Milroy, 1987a). Her Japanese friend, who had been staying in the U.S. for three years, introduced Kaori to a stranger who could practice hip-hop dance with her. She joined a hip-hop dance team and practiced with the team once a week. She had met more African American and international friends through the

same friend who introduced her to her dance teammates. She had a good friendship with this experienced speaker of both English and Japanese. She also had a very good African American friend. They spent time together almost every day. Kaori's roommate was an IEP classmate from Ecuador. They also became good friends each other. She had many uniplex non-Japanese friends, such as friends she ate lunch or dinner with occasionally, spent some time with on weekends, cooked together with, and so on. She mentioned that English was important for job searching in Japan and that it was important for her to understand the English in movies and music. She also mentioned that she would like to have friends all over the world. Her satisfaction with this SA is 90%. It would have been 100% if she had been able to avoid speaking Japanese. She preferred to be in a small group rather than a big one because she could talk more or was forced to talk more.

### Yumi

For Yumi, coming to the U.S. to learn English had been her dream. She studied abroad when she was in high school. At that time she could not understand what her host families were saying at all. She always wanted to be able to understand and tell them what she thought. She explained:

I don't have any particular thing that I really want or have to do here.

But I'm sure I have someone I am supposed to meet and something I am supposed to do.

So I want to try everything. After I get back home, I would like to be able to tell people exactly what I did here. I want to be different. I would like to be able to express myself. I really want to change myself. I have a feeling like each every moment here is the moment of my dream come true. I don't want to waste time. I try to be with English speaking

friends as much as possible. If I have to eat by myself, I just eat a cup noodle kind of thing within five minutes, finish homework, and try to hang out with someone.

Yumi traveled with a group of exchange students from Europe, had a NS “game mate” to play board games with regularly, had a language partner, participated in “language table” where students learning foreign languages got together to have dinner, and participated in the same hip-hop dance team as Kaori. She said, “Some people travel only with Japanese. But if you do that, that would be the same as if you went to Tokyo Disneyland with your Japanese family or friends.”

She had been a part of an acting team in her hometown. There, she had met lots of foreigners. She realized that English was important to communicate with people around the world. She said that she doesn’t like English itself. She liked herself speaking English and the communication atmosphere. She felt more comfortable talking with Americans rather than with Japanese. She said:

I can be as I am. If I am with Japanese, I have to reserve myself not to be thought that I am a strange person or different by others. We (Japanese) need extra process: try to see the person’s face and gradually try to be closer. But Americans just go ahead and do handshakes, saying “yeah!” and make fun of each other. We can be good friends with each other quickly.

Yumi had been an active student in Japan also. She took an advantage of studying at a language university. At her university she had several native speaker teachers. She described that most of

her Japanese classmates were sitting away from the teacher and not participating in the class. She always thought that it was a waste of tuition. She was always sitting right in front of the teacher and spoke English with the teacher. She also criticized the group mentality of Japanese students. Her social network has more diversity than anyone else and many uniplex friends, including Japanese, IEP students, Americans, and other international students, mainly from Europe. She said she was satisfied with her SA program “120%” in the interview.

Rika

Rika also had a language partner and had lunch twice a week with the same group as Mihoko. She said that all NSs in this group talked fast, and she noticed that she was always so focused that she never remembered what she ate for lunch at the meetings. She was also utilizing her prior knowledge of the language. She said with excitement:

I think I started being able to use the English I have been learning; like, in real-life, I can use the grammar I learned when I speak to my friends with my own voice. At the beginning, I was afraid of making grammatical mistakes but noticed people understood even when I made mistakes, like tenses. I still feel apprehensive about talking to Americans, though.

She noticed her grammatical mistakes, achieved the quality of analysis to store the component as intake, and integrated it. She wanted to be fluent, but when the interview was conducted, she said, “My new goal is to produce better than before, not to become fluent.” She had practiced her

input-output cycle in a target language community. Besides her language partner, she had one American friend with whom she usually studied together in the library. She thinks that English is very important for her job searching, especially for her field of interest, journalism. At the same time, she was motivated to come to the U.S. because she saw many Japanese students who could speak both English and Japanese fluently at her university in Japan. Among her tennis club team, she was the only one who could not speak English. At the time of the interview she mentioned she was speaking English for 70% of the day and satisfied with her SA program.

Masaki, Kazuki, Asuka, Hiroyuki, Shoichi and Maki

Masaki, Kazuki, Asuka, Hiroyuki, Shoichi and Maki scored higher than 30 on their SPEAK pre-test. Three out of these six students scored lower on their post-test: Masaki, Asuka and Maki. Asuka and Maki's social networks had shifted from more non-Japanese to Japanese. Masaki's network had been always a small one consisting of Japanese students. Kazuki had had a close American friend whom he hung out with more than anyone else. Hiroyuki had three American roommates and they were good friends of his. Shoichi, especially toward the end of the semester, went downtown for drinks almost every weekend since he was old enough to do so.

Masaki

Masaki said he did not think his English had improved at all. He thought he was only using English 20% of the day. "I wake up, go out for breakfast with Kentaro, go to class, and I don't talk much in the classroom, go back to the room, go out for dinner with Kentaro, and that's it." He was trying to hang out with NSs, but he said they were too busy or gave another excuse, and the plan was cancelled about 50% of the time. He mentioned that everything depended on

one's motivation. He acquired some English speaking friends through Kentaro. Around the time when the interview was conducted, he was gradually acquiring friends into his own network through his hobby, DJ'ing. He was one of two senior students. He paid for his tuition for this SA with his own savings, which was rare. Most of the other students were financially supported by their parents. He said:

If I had more money, I would like to stay here much longer like two years.

My goal was to make music friends. I think I achieved that part.

Another is to make an American girlfriend. I would like to improve my English as much as possible. Well, if I were asked what I did to make that happen, I didn't do anything, though. I really have a desire to be able to speak English, but I think in Japan I can find a job that doesn't require using any English.

So, it's not important for jobs. I could say it doesn't matter in my life, in fact.

Kazuki

Kazuki answered most of the interview questions in English. He said he was using English only 40% a day. He said he tried to use English if others were using it. He had a Japanese roommate who was from the same university as he. They were good friends. He gained confidence in speaking among NSs from one event. He arranged his roommate's birthday party at one of the restaurants downtown. He had to talk to the manager face-to-face and on the phone. He practiced his English outside the classroom in real situations, which he mentioned as being a challenging adventure for him, but it was worth trying. He had one very good American friend and one Taiwanese friend from the IEP. He often had lunch or dinner with the American friend,

and with the Taiwanese friend he played basketball three times a week, at which time he was also joined by other Japanese friends and some Korean friends. He was surprised at the number of Japanese students in the program; however, he did not think that it prevented him from speaking English. He said:

It doesn't matter how many Japanese we have here if you make an effort to talk to English speakers. To talk to us means, I think, there are at least some Americans who have interests in Japan, like my American friend. I thought it wouldn't be hard to find that kind of person. You know there is a language partner program. That is, I think, arranged by others or from outside, not from my own connection. Often times we don't get along well with each other because of our different interests. I think to look for friends by myself is the best.

Asuka

Asuka seemed to have spent more time by herself rather than going out with her Japanese friends and American friends. She used to go out to eat lunch and dinner with friends, but toward the end of the semester she stopped doing so because she was worried about gaining weight. Also, she did not participate in one major party that almost all the Japanese students attended and seemed to thoroughly enjoy. She said in English:

My friend recommended me to go, but I declined because for the weekend we always go downtown because we have no place

to go out, so right now I feel bored to go downtown so I didn't. (...)

Just in my room I did speaking practice using websites from Japan,  
and Skype with my friends.

She mentioned her class level was too difficult. She said, "Sometimes I am depressed by my English." She also mentioned that she started practicing her English on the internet website her Japanese English teacher recommended. When she stayed in the room, not going out to the party with her friends, she spent time doing this. She had a language partner. She said:

In this week I met language partner very much, so compare at  
first time I came here, I can speak, I can talk with her very well  
about any kinds of topic, like love, or about Japanese, something  
like that. So, sometime I noticed my English skill improved.  
Maybe it's kind of goal.

At the end, she mentioned that she thought it was difficult to make friends here and hard to understand their English because of their accent. She had feelings of social distance, and that her identity through the target community was ambivalent.

Hiroyuki

Hiroyuki had three American roommates, and they became very good friends. He found out that if he tried hard to interact with NSs, and even if they did not understand what he said, he could still say what he wanted in a different way, using different words to make them understand.

He spent most of his time at home in the living room watching TV together with his roommates or just talking to each other. He also had one good American friend. They had dinner once or twice a week. He liked to go downtown with his Taiwanese girlfriend and her American friends. He had English speaking friends in Japan. When he came here, he did not feel as nervous as other Japanese students when speaking English to Americans. He said he never talked to his Japanese friends in English because he thought it was weird, and felt uncomfortable although he reported that his English use each day was 85%. He explained his reason for joining this program:

There are two reasons. First, I always had an interest in English.

I didn't have anything special that I really liked. I was hoping to have something I could do, which was English. I enjoyed learning English.

If you know English, you can make lots of international friends. Not only within Japan but also all over the world. I like traveling. Making friends where you traveled must be fun and nice to see them again in the future. I like English, but not studying. I would like to come here again for longer time.

He attended an undergraduate class once at the university here. He said it was very difficult for him to understand; however, he enjoyed it. He wished for some classes which were almost like a regular class but with a lower level of English. He wanted to take some content-based classes. He mentioned also that his weak point was grammar. He regretted that he did not study it more when he was in high school.

## Shoichi

Shoichi's roommate was an American undergraduate student. He did not see him often, but once in a while he got a phone call from his friend. He had opportunities to spend time with his roommate's friend. He started going out for drinks downtown almost every Friday night in the middle of the semester. Whenever he was there, he met regular patrons who went downtown on Fridays. He played basketball three times a week with his Japanese, Taiwanese, Korean and American friends. Usually he studied, but he had a few Americans to whom he could ask questions about English if he wanted. In the classroom he tried to sit with non-Japanese students so that he had to speak English.

He started going downtown in the middle of the semester. He wanted to come to the U.S. because he said, "I think the kind of English that is the most real is American English. I think grammar is OK for me (I studied enough), but pronunciation, I wanted to improve my pronunciation. I don't feel comfortable talking to Americans, but it's fun to talk to them".

## Maki

Maki said, "At the beginning, I was trying not to hang out with Japanese. But these days, I don't care about that too much. I became a good friends with Yoko, and these days I hang out with her more." Maki thought her weak point was listening. Her goal was to improve her listening ability. In response my question asking if she did something special for listening, she said she tried to watch American TV shows on YouTube, like Bewitched or old American talk shows, because she said the English they used in those shows was articulated and easier for her to understand. She also watched the Disney movies recommended by her senior friends at her Japanese college, saying Disney English is pretty.

## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSION

After analyzing the students interviews and the structure of social networks individually with the result of SPEAK test, generally most of the students except three showed improvement on their SPEAK test result. All of these students had already invested in English because they came all the way to the U.S. to attend the IEP program for a semester; however, the individual difference in their subsequent investment in the target language determined whether they felt satisfied with their language learning and SA experience. The students who had invested their cultural capital or increased their cultural capital seemed to have had multi social networks, and their final score on the SPEAK test improved. For example, Kentaro played soccer with other international students and NSs, and Kaori and Yumi had a wide range of social networks among both international students who were studying the Japanese language and Japanese NSs. All three of these students improved their final SPEAK test score in addition to connecting various types of activities into their language learning practice. On the contrary, the students who stayed mostly within Japanese social networks showed less improvement in their score compared to the ones mentioned before. The significant result was that all three students (Masaki, Asuka and Maki) whose score of the post-test decreased had more than 30 on their initial SPEAK test, which is higher than most of the others. The structure of social networks was different from ones who scored higher than 30 on their initial SPEAK test and yet gained points in the end. Masaki mostly had only Japanese-speaking social networks for the whole semester. Asuka stopped going

out with other friends to socialize in town and instead stayed in her room to study English by herself every day. Maki had a intense relationship with one Japanese girlfriend towards the end. Ones who showed a gain on their score had more interactions with native speakers or had more connections in English speaking social networks.

Some other students who had language partners and had good relationships, like meeting each other regularly, also had better gains on their score.

There were two students (Manabu and Kyoko) whose social networks were close-knit among Japanese, yet their scores showed improvement. Acknowledging both inside and outside classrooms as the students' social world, the current study did not examine how and what investment the students had in their classrooms. Like the participants in Trent's (2008) study, it is likely to be explained that Manabu and Kyoko might have had a comfortable space for them as competent English speakers by having, as Trent suggested, "knowledge and expertise" and "freedom and control" in their classrooms. Both of them had fairly low initial scores on the SPEAK test. There must be a space for them to develop their English proficiency.

To sum up, it is not necessarily appropriate to suggest that the differences in the investment in English and in the structures of the social networks may lead to different results of the post-SPEAK test score among the students whose initial scores on the SPEAK test were low. On the contrary, among the students whose initial oral English proficiency was advanced, the structure of their social networks, which may have differed depending on their investment in English, may be able to maintain and develop its proficiency. The result showed that there probably was a relationship between the English language proficiency of Japanese students in a short-term SA context and the structure of their social networks.

Many of the students whose initial language proficiency was low had a tendency of not

being able to construct social networks with English speakers. Although this study did not investigate what the obstacle prevented students from forming more English-speaking social networks, Norton Peirce (1995) suggests that it is important for the L2 teacher to help learners claim the right to speak outside the classroom.

In order for learners to connect to the target language community and create more English-speaking based infrastructure of their SA environment, some activity ideas brought out from the interviewees. For example, to go out for grocery shopping with a NS or a NNS whose English level is higher than the learner's is one. A learner has to construct at least a short-term intimate relationship with a partner to complete the task. Another idea is to let learners organize a party or some kind of event. They have to contact local restaurants or caterers for food and drinks. Once they start feeling more comfortable going outside to talk to the local community, I predict that some of the learners will start looking for more opportunities to meet people or develop an intimate relationship with some of the locals with whom they have interacted. Most of the students said they wanted to be able to speak English because they had a desire to know other cultures and to make friends from other countries. This would help them go out to meet people. Having a language partner was successful for several students in this group. As their language partners were interested in Japanese culture and language, in this case, both of their investments corresponded, a situation in which learners were able to build intimate relationships even faster. Both parties are acquiring a good return on their investment (Norton Peirce, 1995).

Norton Peirce also states that “if learners invest in a second language, they do so with the understanding that they will acquire a wider range of symbolic and material resources<sup>6</sup>, which

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<sup>6</sup> Symbolic resources are resources as language, education, and friendship. Material resources include capital goods, real estate, and money (Norton Peirce, 1995).

will in turn increase the value of their cultural capital” (p.17). One student mentioned that he wanted to see himself grow, not only in terms of English proficiency but also in some other parts of himself. He said, “I started to understand about features or characteristics of other nationalities like French people are like this, people from the South America seem to be cheerful, and so on. Of course, it depends on each one, but...” Schauer (2007) concludes his study by saying, “realizing cross-cultural differences not just by reading about them, but by experiencing them first hand, can have a very powerful impact on learners and their view of the world” (p.213). Acquiring symbolic resources through realizing cultural differences and experiencing them, he certainly became a better developed person while practicing L2 among the diverse community, which may be relevant to SA literatures that show that SA participants developed a wider range of pragmatic competence than their peers in their home country.

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## APPENDIX

APPENDIX: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

I. First stimulus question	I. Possible derivative question
<b>Name: How often do you meet (Name) per week? (4&gt; or 4&lt;)</b>	
<b>(a) Leisure and spare time</b>	
Who do you hang out with most?	How often do you meet?
What do you usually do on your weekend?	With who? How often? Every weekend?
Have you been out to see the football games? Or to the Grove? Or any sports related activities?	With who? How many times? Tailgate? Met new friends?
Do you go to the parties?	How often? With who? Where? Do you talk in English/Japanese? New friends?
What is your usual routine after school?	With who? How often?
Do you belong to any extra-curricular activities, like sports club? Volunteering?	What are they? With who? How often? Do you speak English/Japanese?
What is your plan for the Thanksgiving holiday?	With who?
Do you smoke?	Where? With someone? How often? Do you speak English?
<b>(a) Dining</b>	
Who do you eat lunch with?	Did you buy a meal plan? How often? How about the weekend lunch?
Who do you usually have dinner with?	Where? Do you cook? With who?
Do you go out to eat sometimes?	How often? With who? Where? Speak English/Japanese?

<b>(c) Living and housing</b>	
Who is your roommate?	Do you speak English to her/him? How often do you meet? Is he/she your friend? Do you go out with him/her?
Who do you ask for a ride if you need?	American? How often?
<b>(d) School and classes</b>	
What classes do you have?	Who is your teacher? Do you talk to your teacher outside the class? How often? Who do you usually sit with? How much do you speak English? Do you have your good friends in the class and sit together?
Who do you usually hang out with during the break?	
Do you have a language partner/planet partner or any other kind?	How often do you meet? How long do you talk? Americans?
Who do you talk to when you need some help for your homework or language?	
<b>(a) General relationships</b>	
Who are your good Japanese friends?	How often do you meet them per week? Meet on weekends? Eat lunch/dinner with him/her?
Do you have a girlfriend or boyfriend?	Where? How often do you meet? Talk?
Who is your best friend?	American? Non-Japanese? How often do you meet him/her?
Is there anyone you meet but forgot to tell? Any others?	
<b>(a) Long distance relationship (ask Skype/Email/Chat)</b>	
How often do you talk to your family in Japan?	Skype? Email?
How often do you talk to your friends in Japan?	Do you have any English-speaking friends? How many, how often?
Do you have friends or family members in the U.S.?	How often do talk to them? In English or Japanese?
Is there anyone from your school or side jobs you talk sometime?	Skype? Email? Teachers? How often?

Have you ever belong to any club activities at school?	Do you still talk to the teacher or friends?
Any others?	
<b>(a) Relationship through media</b>	
Are you on Facebook or Mixi?	How often do you check it? When did you start? How many friends do you have? Are they Japanese or Americans? How many do you think you are meeting face-to-face here? Do you send the messages? To whom? Do you write in English or Japanese? How often? (Mixi) Do you write Diary? In Japanese? Are friends on Mixi here? Do you have any whom you meet face-to-face? Do you have friends whom you talk to on the phone?
Do you have a cell phone here?	How often do you use? Who do you talk to? How often? Do you text? In English?
Any others?	
<b>(a) General (not SN)</b>	
Why did you decide to come to the U.S.?	Is it your own idea? Have you ever lived in the U.S. or other foreign country?
Do you think English is important?	Why? Speaking/listening/writing/reading?
Do you think your English improved?	How much do you think your English improved since you came here? Which area? Speaking/listening/writing/reading? Do you feel comfortable speaking English? Comfortable listening?
How much do you think you speak English a day?	Usual day/average (%)

What is your goal for this Study Abroad?	
Recent event or activities which you think you used a lot of English (Speaking/Listening)?	
Is there anything that you thought was not your expectation at the IEP or the life in the U.S. itself?	Disappointed/more than your expectation and satisfied?
Your satisfaction (%) of this study abroad?	Why?
Any suggestions or comments?	

## VITA

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