

Article

Examining the Effects of Long-Term Study Abroad on the Listenership of Japanese EFL University Students

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to measure the effect of study abroad on one aspect of learners' pragmatic competence, listenership. A total of 8 Japanese university students participated in this study (4 females and 4 males). Each student was given pragmatic tests at three points in time: within four to seven days of going abroad (pre-test), within seven days of returning to Japan (post-test 1), and approximately eight weeks later (i.e., post-test 2, the delayed post-test). Each of these tests involved participating in an intercultural conversation with a native speaker of English (NES) and being interviewed. To determine the efficacy of preparatory instruction, half of the students set to study abroad (N = 4) were given explicit instruction on listenership. This consisted of two (2-hours each) instructional sessions whereby the teacher drew students' attention to various features of listenership, engaged them in discussions on the implications of cross-cultural communication styles and, subsequently, taught them of some common patterns of listenership in English. The results of this study point to the benefits of long-term study abroad (SA), particularly on the learners who received instruction prior to studying abroad.

Keywords

Japanese EFL context, study abroad, pragmatics, listenership, second language acquisition (SLA)

1 Introduction

The paper examines the effects of long-term study abroad on the listenership of EFL learners. To begin, it is necessary to define the key term used in this study, *Listenership*. According to McCarthy (2002, 2003), Listenership is a conversational skill set which is necessary for speakers to engage in effective communication. More specifically, Listenership refers to the use of appropriate verbal and non-verbal listener responses (commonly called *backchannels*), and other expressions to agree with, acknowledge, react and/or engage with the contribution of another speaker. Listener responses can range from head nods and brief paralinguistic ejaculations (such as *uhuh*, *mm*, *oo*) to longer utterances with more affective content such as evaluations (i.e., *that's great* and *I really agree*) to return questions and/or conversational repair strategies (such as *Pardon me* and *Could you explain what you mean?*). As the writer will outline below, providing adequate listenership behavior in L2 English conversations is an area in which Japanese EFL learners (JEFLs hereafter) have notably struggled with (Cutrone, 2005, 2014). One way that has

been suggested to improve JEFs' Listenership behavior is for them to gain more exposure to English by studying abroad (Tanaka & Ellis, 2003). Thus, in responding to calls for more research in this area, the researcher seeks to measure the efficacy of study abroad on JEFs' listenership behavior in this study.

2 The Effects of Studying Abroad

Although there seems to be a popular belief that the best way to learn a foreign language is to study abroad (The Local, 2020), it is not always clear what learners gain from study abroad experiences regarding foreign language outcomes. In an attempt to synthesize empirical studies on undergraduate language learners' study abroad (SA) experiences, Isabelli-Garcia, Brown, Plews, and Dewey (2018) discuss how difficult it is to conduct research experiments in the field of SA. According to Isabelli-Garcia et al. (2018, p. 444), due to the challenges of random assignment and creation of comparable control groups of adequate size to draw inferences, most published studies tend to be "pre-experimental" in that the treatment tends to be given only to the one experimental group over time. Furthermore, as Taniguchi and Collentine (2018) assert, there is great variation in terms of learners' practice opportunities, learning outcomes, and individual characteristics that point to a complex mix of internal and external variables shaping the SA experience. Moreover, focusing specifically on learning outcomes, it is not always clear what students gain from their time abroad linguistically. To help clarify this, Tanaka and Ellis (2003), reviewing some of the research surveys conducted by Coleman (1997) and Freed (1990, 1993, 1995, 1998), summarize the effects of SA on foreign language learning, as follows:

1. Accuracy and complexity, measured in terms of frequency of mistakes, sentence length or syntactic complexity in oral production, did not change in any noticeable way.
2. Gains in fluency, in terms of the speaking rate (syllables per minute) or phonation/time ratio (percentage of total time spent speaking), were strong.
3. Overall oral proficiency scores, measured by the ACTFL Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), were higher in learners in study-abroad programs than in learners who did not participate.
4. Gains in overall oral proficiency scores were stronger than gains in test scores on grammar, listening, and reading.
5. Vocabulary gains, measured by vocabulary tests, were stronger than those of comparable students who did not participate in a study-abroad program.
6. The higher the students' initial level of proficiency, the lower the gains in proficiency as a result of studying abroad. (p. 67)

Thus, as Tanaka and Ellis have outlined, gains from study abroad tend to be made more in the area of oral proficiency than grammar and reading; however, this is one of the areas of EFL in Japan which seems to be somewhat misunderstood, as a great number of university administrators continue to rely on non-communicative tests such as the TOEFL PBT or the TOEIC to monitor their students' progress over time, even to measure the affects of SA (Lee, Yoshizawa & Shimabayashi, 2006; Vongpumivitch, 2013).

The results of a study conducted by Cutrone and Datzman (2015) are consistent with the findings of Tanaka and Ellis (2003). This study sought to compare Japanese EFL university learners who studied abroad for three weeks versus those who stayed at home and found that the 27 students who stayed at home averaged a higher score on TOEFL PBT tests than the 44 students who studied in North America for three weeks. As studies such as this have already shown that SA, at least in the short-term, has little impact on learners' grammar and reading abilities, the researcher attempts to better understand how SA can impact learners' pragmatic competence. In his recent examination of L2 pragmatics literature, Ren (2018) describes how L2 pragmatics research has tended to focus mainly on speech acts (Kasper & Dahl, 1991) and, to a lesser degree, conversational structure and conversational implicature (Alcón Soler & Martínez-Flor, 2008; Bardovi-Harlig, 2005). Ren stresses the need for more investigation into learners' pragmatic competence in interaction. To this end, this study focuses specifically on learners'

ability to produce natural language in context by examining Listenership behavior. This was chosen for two reasons: first, Listenership is an area of analysis that has received little research attention, and which has also been neglected in terms of classroom application (Capper, 2000; Cutrone, 2016b); and second, it truly needs to be better understood because it can be the source of great miscommunication and/or negative perceptions across cultures (Cutrone, 2005, 2016a; LoCastro, 1987).

3 What is Adequate Listenership Behavior?

Regarding what constitutes adequate listenership behavior, it does not make sense to have strict numerical targets to adhere to because listenership behavior is free flowing (i.e., non-static) and will often be dictated by the context of a conversation and/or the personality of the interlocutors therein. Hence, directions for effective listenership, which are loosely put forward as mere directions to follow, are based on two simple goals: trying to approximate the listenership behavior of fully proficient speakers of English, and taking into account the issues that JEFLLs have been known to have where listenership is concerned. The sub-features of Listenership that will be examined in this study include frequency, variability, discourse contexts, simultaneous speech backchannels, and form and function.

3.1 Frequency

Frequency refers to how many backchannels a non-primary speaker (i.e., listener) sends while their primary speaking interlocutor is taking a speaking turn. As Japanese EFL speakers have been shown to backchannel up to four times more frequently than proficient speakers of English (Cutrone, 2005, 2014; Clancy et al., 1996; Crawford, 2003; Ike, 2010; Maynard, 1990, 1997; White, 1989), instruction in this area should be geared towards teaching JEFLLs to backchannel less. In analyzing the frequency of backchannels attributed to a person or a group (in this category or any other), it is important to take into account how much their interlocutor spoke. In other words, if one's interlocutor spoke a lot, the listener would have far more opportunities to provide backchannels. Thus, the overall frequency of backchannels is calculated and compared according to the number of words their interlocutors uttered in a primary speaking role. This way a participant's rate of backchannelling can be shown apart from the amount of the opportunities they had.

3.2 Variability

Variability refers to the ability of non-primary speakers to employ a wide range of backchannel types. In Cutrone (2005, 2014) and Boxer's (1993) earlier analyses, this was a weak area for JEFLLs as they tended to rely mainly on non-verbal and/or brief non-word vocalizations (i.e., minimal backchannels) in their intercultural conversations in English. To show a clear difference between backchannel types, the researcher makes a distinction between minimal and extended responses. Minimal responses refer to any non-lexical and/or non-verbal listener response occurring in isolation, whereas, in contrast, extended responses refer to the lengthier verbal listener feedback consisting of multiple and varied words irrespective of nonverbal backchannel accompaniment. O'Keeffe and Adolphs (2008) help with the specifics of this distinction by describing minimal responses as short utterances (for instance, *yeah*) or non-word vocalizations (such as *mm*, *umhum*), whereas non-minimal response tokens (i.e., what this study refers to as extended responses) are comprised mostly of adverbs or adjectives functioning as pragmatic markers (e.g. *good*, *really great*, *absolutely*) or short phrases/minimal clauses (e.g. *you're not serious*, *Is that so? by all means*, *fair enough*, *that's true*, *not at all*).

Within this framework, instruction should be geared towards teaching JEFLLs to send fewer minimal responses and more extended responses.

3.3 Discourse contexts favoring backchannels

To understand what is meant by the category of *discourse context favoring backchannels*, it is useful to revisit the seminal work of Sacks, Schegloff & Jefferson, (1974) which proposes a model for the organization of turn-taking in conversations. Sacks et al. describe a turn to consist of one or more *turn-constructional units* (TCUs), which range in size from a single word to clauses filled with many embedded clauses. Each TCU ends at a *transition-relevant-place* (TRP), which is identified as a moment in the conversation at which an exchange of turn may be possible. TRPs are signalled by interlocutors to each other through various contextual cues such as *silence* or the *end of a question* and are found in similar discourse contexts to those of backchannels (Clancy et al., 1996; Maynard, 1997), which suggests a strong link between the two that could have pedagogical implications. With this in mind, it is important to remember that the non-primary speaker may pass up the opportunity to take the primary turn at talk at a TRP by providing a backchannel instead. Thus, within this framework, discourse contexts favoring backchannels refer to the places within the primary speaker's speech where the non-primary speaker frequently sends backchannels.

Over the years, a number of potential discourse contexts of backchannels have been explored, such as pauses (Cutrone, 2005; 2014; Maynard, 1997), self-adaptors and gesticulation (Duncan & Fiske, 1977), gaze (Kendon, 1977) and prosodic features (Ward & Tsukahara, 2000); however, the most common discourse context favoring backchannels in English has been shown to be final clause boundaries (Cutrone 2005, 2014; Maynard 1986, 1987, 1989, 1990, 1997; White 1989). To understand what is meant by the term *final clause boundaries*, it is necessary to explain the distinction between final clause boundaries and internal clause boundaries, which can sometimes be difficult to decipher in emerging spontaneous speech. A final clause boundary is identified at points in the primary speaker's speech where the text unit is structurally and semantically acceptable as a clause but is not bound by terminal punctuation (Cutrone, 2013); as such, these text units are fully meaningful and could end the utterance there (i.e., terminative). In comparison, an internal clause satisfies the grammatical structure of a clause but not the semantic condition; hence, internal clauses differ because the meaning of the clause is not complete, and there is a requirement for the utterance to go on in order for the meaning to be complete (i.e., continuative). The following example illustrates the difference between the two types of clausal boundaries:

Tom: it makes me very nervous/ to speak in front of a lot of people//

In this example, an internal clause boundary is marked (with a slash / symbol) after the main clause *it makes me nervous* because the subordinate clause *to speak in front of a lot of people* is necessary for the utterance to make sense semantically. Accordingly, a final clause boundary is marked (with a double slash // symbol) after the word *people*. Relative to the scope of this study, the researcher has chosen to delimit the study of discourse contexts to focus on final clause boundaries, and increases in backchannels at this discourse context are considered a positive development.

3.4 Simultaneous speech backchannels

Simultaneous speech backchannels (SSBs) are those that overlap with the primary speaker's speech. JEFs are known to send up to four times backchannels more whilst their interlocutor is having a turn at talk, and these frequent responses are sometimes misinterpreted negatively as interruptions (Cutrone 2005, 2014; Hayashi 1998; Lebra 1976; Maynard 1997, Mizutani 1982). Hence, instruction in this area should be geared towards having JEFs send fewer backchannels while their interlocutor is speaking. As explained in Section 3.2 above, the raw number of BCs sent in a given category does not provide an accurate depiction because it does not consider the amount of opportunities afforded to the listener (i.e., in terms of the number of turns their interlocutor took, as well as the length of each turn). To offer more context on how often a person and/or group employed SSBs as compared to backchannels uttered during

pauses (i.e., non-SSBs), the number of SSBs were calculated as a percentage of the total backchannels that the person and/or group uttered.

3.5 Form and function

Undoubtedly, the backchannel form that a non-primary speaker sends should correspond to the function that they wish to convey, and their form/function should be recognized by their interlocutor as such. Due to the great breadth of this topic, it is not practical to cover all the possible backchannel forms and functions here (for a general list, see Cutrone, 2010); thus, analysis of form and function is delimited to the specific contexts relevant to the central issues in this study, such as situations when JEFs did not understand. Various studies have demonstrated that JEFs have, at times, feigned understanding in situations of non-understanding, which often resulted in communication breakdown (Blanche, 1987; Cutrone, 2005, 2014). This includes the JEF tendency towards sending unconventional backchannel forms (i.e., continuer, understanding, agreement, and/or support and empathy types such as *yeah, uhuh, mm, right*) when they do not understand what their interlocutor is saying.

The instructional target here would be for JEFs to feign understanding less in these situations and instead use conversational repair strategies (CRSs). CRSs are divided into two types of listener response: minimal backchannel expressions ending with rising intonation that seemingly function to request clarification (such as *Huh? Really? Etc.*), and longer expressions that constitute full speaking turns (such as *I don't quite get what you mean; could you explain that?*). To identify expressions that constitute these longer CRSs, the researcher referred to text strings that correspond to the models set forth in two language teachers' resource books that have been entirely based on these structures: *Function in English* (Blundell, Higgins & Middlemiss 1982) and *Conversation and Dialogues in Action* (Dörnyei & Thurrell 1992).

4 Research Questions

This study has two main aims: to help researchers and practitioners gain a better understanding of how long-term SA affects various aspects of learners' pragmatic competence, and to help language professionals better prepare their students for success when they SA. To this end, the following research questions have been formulated:

- 1: What are the effects of long-term study abroad (SA) on the listenership of the Japanese EFL university students (JEFs) in this study?
- 2: What were the effects of pre-SA instruction on the listenership of the JEFs in this study upon returning from SA?

In focusing on Japanese EFL university students, this study also contributes to our broad understanding of how learners in a particular context acquire foreign language skills.

5 Methodology

5.1 Participants

The study included 12 participants. Eight of the participants were third-year Japanese EFL students at a national university in southern Japan (4 females and 4 males), who were enrolled in a faculty that focuses on English studies and cultural diversity. At the start of the study, JEFs were between 21 and 23 years old and were at least competent users of English (as reflected by IELTS scores of 6.0 or higher). Further, the remaining four participants were native speakers of English (NESs), who served in two capacities: two NESs (1 female and 1 male) served as interlocutors to converse with the JEFs in the intercultural

dyadic conversations, while the role of the other two NESs (1 female and 1 male) was to assess the JEFs' performances in the video-recorded conversations. All participants were given clear explanations and instructions regarding this study and their role in it.

5.2 Data collection methods

Observations and interviews were used to collect data. First, observations were carried out by video recording intercultural dyadic conversations (conducted in English) between a JEF and a NES. These conversations took place in the researcher's office, and only the conversational participants were present at the time of the recording. Conversational participants did not know each other prior to the study, and, thus, some time was given for them to get comfortable and mildly acquainted with each other. Participants were recorded for fifteen minutes, of which the middle five minutes were used as conversational data (because the middle part was thought to have the best chance of being most natural). The researcher was seeking an informal and casual conversational register; conversational prompts were given to help stimulate conversation, but participants were told they could speak about anything they like. The video recorded conversations were, subsequently, transcribed (see Appendix 1 for transcription conventions and Appendix 2 for sample transcription) and analyzed for patterns and features of listenership, such as frequency, variability, discourse contexts, simultaneous speech backchannels, form and functions of listener responses. Additionally, post-conversation reflective interviews were used to determine when students did not understand what their interlocutor was saying and how they reacted in these non-understanding situations. Retrospective interviews consisted of each JEF watching a recording of their intercultural conversation and answering the researcher's questions. Due to the small sample size of this study, it was not prudent to apply inferential statistics to the quantitative data produced; descriptive statistics were used, however, to present some of the salient features and trends found in the data.

5.3 Procedures and time schedule of this study

As Table 1 outlines, the eight JEF participants were each given tests at three points in time: within four to seven days of going abroad (Pre-test), within one to seven days of returning to Japan (Post-test 1), and approximately two months later (Post-test 2). Each test was identical and involved JEFs participating in an intercultural conversation with a NES. In an attempt to control for sociolinguistic variables such as age, gender and social status in the intercultural conversations, JEFs were paired with NESs that had similar characteristics as them. Further, to determine the efficacy of preparatory instruction, half of the students (Group A) set to study abroad ($N = 4$) were given explicit instruction on listenership before they departed. This took place two to three days prior to departure and consisted of two (2-hour) instructional sessions focusing on the following strategies: making students aware of how listenership can differ across cultures (via videos and discussion), giving students exposure to models demonstrating effective listenership in a host of situations in English, and, ultimately, providing students with practice opportunities and subsequent corrective feedback (further details of targets and instructional methods are provided in Cutrone 2010, 2016b).

Table 1

Schedule of the Study

| Aspect of study | Time administered |
|--|------------------------------|
| Pre-SA Evaluations (observation/interview) | 4-7 days before study abroad |
| Group A receives Instruction on Listenership | 2-3 days before study abroad |

| | |
|---|--|
| Groups A and B Study Abroad | Duration: 6-12 months of study abroad |
| Post-SA Evaluations (observation/interview) | 1-7 days after returning from study abroad |
| Delayed Post-SA Evaluations (observation/interview) | 8 weeks after returning from study abroad |

The study abroad experiences of the eight JEFLs were somewhat different; details of their individual situations are provided in Table 2 below:

Table 2

The Two Groups Used in this Study

| Group | Pseudonym (Gender) | Location | Length | Hours of class time / week | Content of study | Make-up of class members | Accommodation settings |
|--------------|-----------------------|----------|-------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| A (N = 4) | Kenta (M) | U.K. | 1 year | 12 | Humanities/ Misc | mixed nationalities | Dormitory (with non- Japanese roommates) |
| | Akihiro (M) | U.K. | 1 year | 15 | Humanities/ Misc | mixed nationalities | Dormitory (with non- Japanese roommates) |
| | Sae (F) | U.S.A. | 6 months | 12 | Humanities/ Misc | mixed nationalities | Dormitory (with non- Japanese roommates) |
| | Yukari (F) | Canada | 1 year | 15 | Humanities/ Misc | mixed nationalities | Dormitory (with non- Japanese roommates) |
| B (N = 4) | Taka (M) | U.S.A. | 6 months | 15 | Humanities/ Misc | mixed nationalities | Dormitory (with non- Japanese roommates) |
| | Hiro (M) | Canada | 1 year | 10 | Humanities/ Misc | mixed nationalities | Dormitory (with non- Japanese roommates) |
| | Kumi (F) | U.K. | 1 year | 15 | Humanities/ Misc | mixed nationalities | Dormitory (with non- Japanese roommates) |
| | Mika (F) | U.K. | 6 months | 10 | Humanities/ Misc | mixed nationalities | Dormitory (with non- Japanese roommates) |

6 Results

6.1 Frequency

Groups A and B's total backchannel (BC) output, number of their interlocutor's words, and the number of backchannels per interlocutor word during the Pre-test, Post-test 1 and Post-test 2 are reported in Tables 3 and 4 respectively below. To calculate the frequency of backchannels, it is necessary to consider the backchannel opportunities afforded to each conversational participant. Thus, taking into account how much their partner spoke, the greater the number of interlocutor words between one's backchannels, the less frequent their rate of backchannelling. Group A sent a backchannel every 5.84 of their interlocutor's words during the Pre-test, 8.59 during Post-test 1, and 8.35 during Post-test 2, while Group B provided a backchannel every 5.91 of their interlocutor's words during the Pre-test, 7.68 during Post-test 1, and 6.39 during Post-test 2.

Table 3
Differences in Frequency of Backchannels over Time for Group A

| N = 10 | Total backchannels | | | Interlocutor's words | | | Average number of interlocutor's words between backchannels | | |
|------------------|--------------------|--------|--------|----------------------|--------|--------|---|--------|--------|
| | Pre | Post 1 | Post 2 | Pre | Post 1 | Post 2 | Pre | Post 1 | Post 2 |
| Total | 140 | 58 | 72 | 817 | 498 | 601 | — | — | — |
| Mean (x̄) | 35 | 14.5 | 18 | 204.3 | 124.5 | 150.3 | 5.84 | 8.59 | 8.35 |
| SD | 8.9 | 6.2 | 9.1 | 62.35 | 55.22 | 64.5 | 10.17 | 8.74 | 7.3 |

Table 4
Differences in Frequency of Backchannels over Time for Group B

| N = 10 | Backchannels | | | Interlocutor's words | | | Average number of interlocutor's words between backchannels | | |
|------------------|--------------|--------|--------|----------------------|--------|--------|---|--------|--------|
| | Pre | Post 1 | Post 2 | Pre | Post 1 | Post 2 | Pre | Post 1 | Post 2 |
| Total | 129 | 88 | 98 | 762 | 676 | 627 | — | — | — |
| Mean (x̄) | 32.3 | 22 | 24.5 | 190.5 | 169 | 156.8 | 5.91 | 7.68 | 6.39 |
| SD | 11.1 | 8.7 | 8.6 | 58.5 | 61.83 | 64.4 | 8.89 | 9.5 | 10.43 |

Demonstrating the paths of the two groups collectively, Figure 1 shows that Group A achieved the desired (and sustained) result of backchanneling noticeably less after studying abroad; however, Group B differed somewhat in that members initially showed modest improvement (by backchanneling noticeably less at Pre-test 1) but could not sustain it at the time of the delayed test (Post-test 2). From the Pre-test to Post-test 2, Group A sent on average 2.51 fewer backchannels per interlocutor word, while Group B sent only .48 fewer.

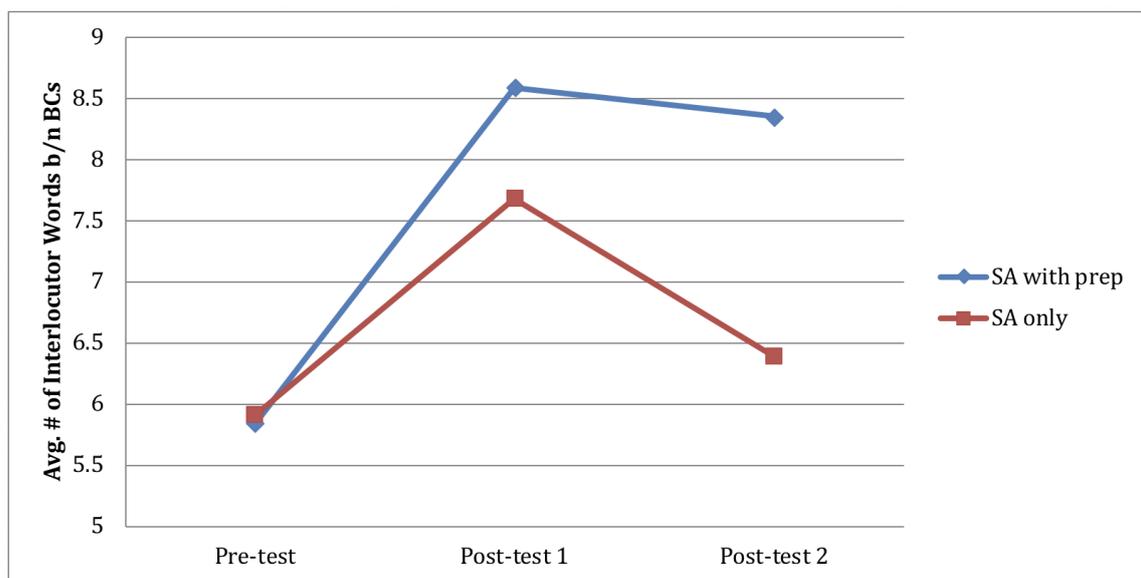


Figure 1. Comparing backchannel frequencies of groups A and B over time

6.2 Variability

The Variability category is limited to Groups A and B's use of minimal versus extended backchannels (as described above). Tables 5 and 6 report, respectively, the raw totals of minimal versus extended backchannels, the mean percentage constituted by each sub type of the total backchannels (BCs) and standard deviations (SDs) at the three points of measurement. As shown in Table 5, the number of minimal backchannels sent by Group A decreased from the Pre-test (120) to the Post-test 1 (72) and the Post-test 2 (78). In addition, the mean percentage of Group A's minimal backchannels decreased from 85.7% in the Pre-test, to 69% in Post-test 1 and 68% in Post-test 2. In comparison, Group A sent a total of 4 extended backchannels in the Pre-test, 6 in Post-test 1 and 10 in Post-test 2. Further, the mean percentage of Group A's extended backchannels increased from 2.86% in the Pre-test, to 10.34% in Post-test 1 and 13.89% in Post-test 2. Extended backchannels observed during the tests were highly idiosyncratic and included such reactive expressions as *yeah, me too; that sounds cool; an awesome idea; I totally agree, etc.*

Table 5

Group A's Use of Minimal Versus Extended Backchannels over Time

| N = 10 | Pre-test | | | Post-test 1 | | | Post-test 2 | | | |
|--------|---------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------------|-------|--------------------------|-------------|-------|--------------------------|------|
| | Type of Backchannel | Total | \bar{x} % of Total BCs | SD | Total | \bar{x} % of Total BCs | SD | Total | \bar{x} % of Total BCs | SD |
| | Minimal Response | 120 | 85.7 | 2.9 | 72 | 69 | 3.6 | 78 | 68 | 3.32 |
| | Extended Response | 4 | 2.86 | 1.03 | 6 | 10.34 | 1.38 | 10 | 13.89 | 2.57 |

Group B followed a similar path to Group A in terms of the raw totals of minimal backchannels. As shown in Table 6, the number of minimal backchannels sent by Group B decreased from the Pre-test (112) to the Post-test 1 (72) and the Post-test 2 (79). Additionally, the mean percentage of Group A's minimal backchannels decreased from 86.82% in the Pre-test, to 81.82% in Post-test 1 and 79.59% in Post-test 2. Comparatively, Group B sent a total of 3 extended backchannels in the Pre-test, 4 in Post-test 1 and 5 in Post-test 2. Moreover, the mean percentage of Group A's extended backchannels increased from 2.33% in the Pre-test, to 4.55% in Post-test 1 and 5.1% in Post-test 2.

Table 6

Group B's Use of Minimal Versus Extended Backchannels over Time

| N = 10 | Pre-test | | | Post-test 1 | | | Post-test 2 | | | |
|--------|---------------------|-------|--------------------------|-------------|-------|--------------------------|-------------|-------|--------------------------|------|
| | Type of Backchannel | Total | \bar{x} % of Total BCs | SD | Total | \bar{x} % of Total BCs | SD | Total | \bar{x} % of Total BCs | SD |
| | Minimal Response | 112 | 86.82 | 4.1 | 72 | 81.82 | 2.4 | 79 | 79.59 | 3.81 |
| | Extended Response | 3 | 2.33 | 3.62 | 4 | 4.55 | 4.5 | 5 | 5.1 | 4.88 |

While Groups A and B both successfully managed to decrease their mean percentages of minimal backchannels, Group A's decrease was clearly more precipitous and more sustained at the time of the delayed post-test. Specifically, as Figure 2 demonstrates, Group A decreased by 16.7% from the Pre-test to Post-test 1 and by 17.7% from the Pre-test to Post-test 2, whereas Group B decreased by 5% from the Pre-test to Post-test 1 and by 7.23% from the Pre-test to Post-test 2.

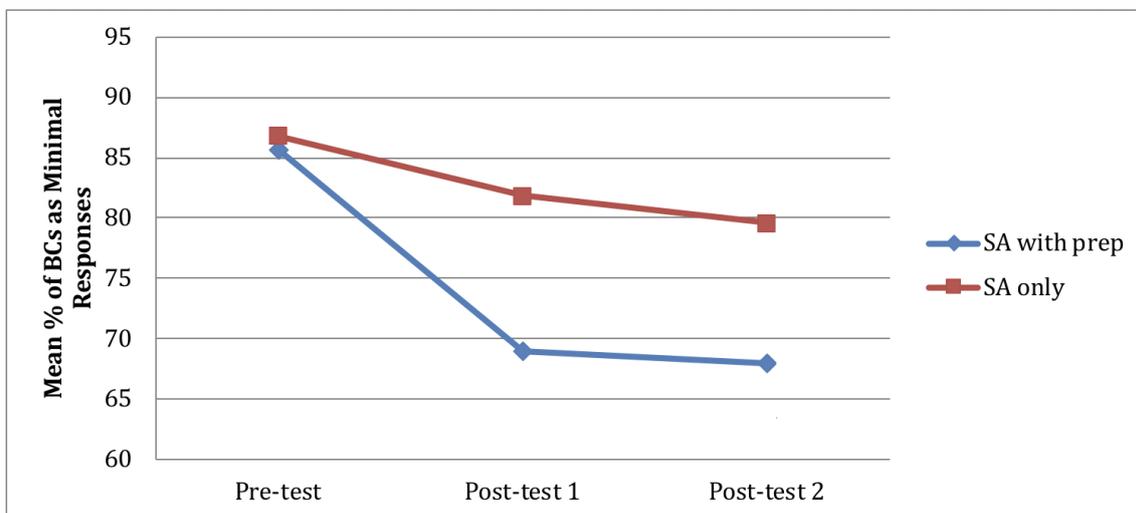


Figure 2. Comparing the proportions of minimal backchannels over time

Similar to the results pertaining to minimal backchannels, Groups A and B both successfully managed to increase their mean percentages of extended backchannels; however, Group A's increase was again clearly more precipitous and more sustained at the time of the delayed post-test. Figure 3 illustrates that Group A increased by 7.48% from the Pre-test to Post-test 1 and by 11.03% from the Pre-test to Post-test 2, whereas Group B increased by 2.22% from the Pre-test to Post-test 1 and by 2.77% from the Pre-test to Post-test 2.

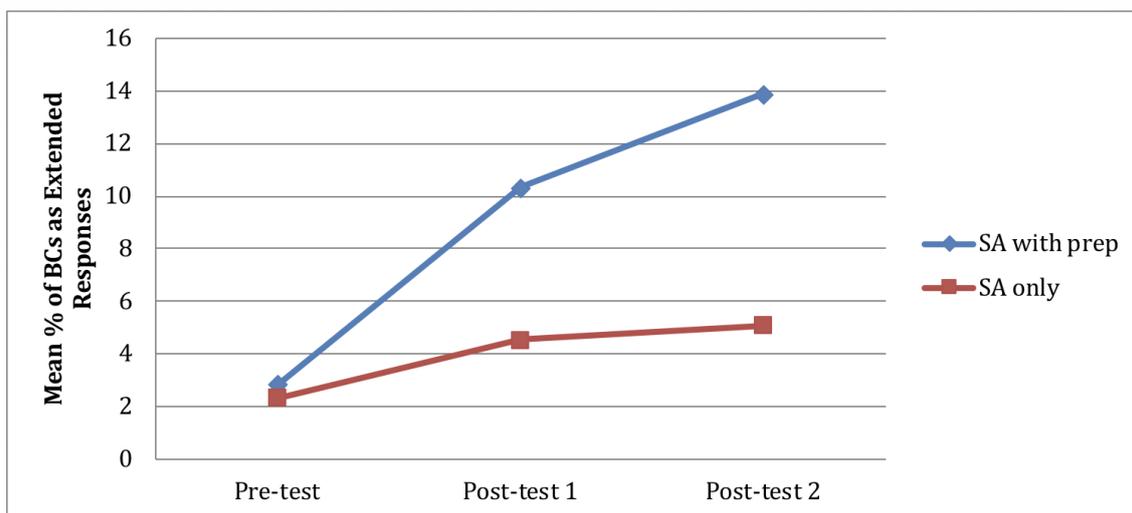


Figure 3. Comparing the proportions of extended backchannels over time

6.3 Discourse contexts

Regarding the primary discourse contexts of backchannels, Tables 7 and 8 respectively report two main statistics regarding the clausal boundaries (CBs) of Groups A and B's backchannels at the Pre-test, Post-test 1 and Post-test 2: (1) the mean percentage of opportunities (Opps) that CBs attracted backchannels

(with SDs), and (2) the mean percentage of backchannels constituted by CBs (with SDs). The following excerpt is helpful in understanding how a non-primary speaker's backchannels were sent relative to the CB opportunities provided in the primary speaker's speech:

Masayuki; i happen to watch white collar // (.) i choose i chose white collar // (.)

ah very nice

In this excerpt, Masayuki is in the midst of a primary speaking turn at talk, and his interlocutor's listener response is shown in italics below his utterance at the point it occurred in the talk. As the transcription conventions in Appendix A detail, two slashes side by side (//) mark final clause boundaries (CBs). Correspondingly, in the excerpt above, clause boundaries are shown respectively after *i happen to watch white collar//* and *i chose white collar//*. Thus, in the two CB opportunities provided, Masayuki's interlocutor (Fred) only sends a listener response (i.e., *ah very nice*) at one of them (i.e., *i chose white collar*). Accordingly, one backchannel sent in two opportunities would be calculated as 50%. It should be noted as well that more opportunities to provide backchannels at CBs are afforded to those whose interlocutors speak more. With this in mind however, by not presenting raw scores and instead focusing on the percentage of opportunities that CBs attracted BCs and the percentage of BCs that constituted CBs, the researcher is able to present comparable data between participants regardless of how much they or their interlocutor spoke. In other words, two backchannels sent at four CBs would be the same percentage as twenty backchannels sent at forty clausal boundaries.

Hence, as shown in Table 7, Group A sent BCs in 31% of the opportunities presented to them in the Pre-test, and successfully increased to 39.2% in Post-test 1, and 40% in Post-test 2. In addition, the mean percentage of Group A's total BCs that were sent at or near CBs increased from 57.71% in the Pre-test, to 66.13% at Post-test 1, and 72.01% at Post-test 2.

Table 7

Discourse Contexts of Group A's Backchannels over Time

| N = 10 | Pre-test | | Post-test 1 | | Post-test 2 | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| | \bar{x} % of Opps (SD) | \bar{x} % of BCs (SD) | \bar{x} % of Opps (SD) | \bar{x} % of BCs (SD) | \bar{x} % of Opps (SD) | \bar{x} % of BCs (SD) |
| At or near final CB | 31 (21.83) | 57.1 (24.74) | 39.2 (16.7) | 66.13 (19) | 40 (13.7) | 72.1 (17.8) |

Table 8 reports that Group B sent BCs in 26.21% of the opportunities afforded to them in the Pre-test, 27.3% in Post-test 1, and 28.1% in Post-test 2. Moreover, the mean percentage of Group B's total BCs that were sent at or near CBs were 60.8% in the Pre-test, 62.28% at Post-test 1, and 64.8% at Post-test 2.

Table 8

Discourse Contexts of Group B's Backchannels over Time

| N = 10 | Pre-test | | Post-test 1 | | Post-test 2 | |
|---------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------------|----------------------------|
| | \bar{x} % of Opps (SD) | \bar{x} % of BCs (SD) | \bar{x} % of Opps (SD) | \bar{x} % of BCs (SD) | \bar{x} % of Opps (SD) | \bar{x} % of BCs (SD) |
| At or near final CB | 26.21 (4.97) | 60.8 (22.71) | 27.3 (5.43) | 62.28 (19.2) | 28.1 (5.17) | 64.8 (18.83) |

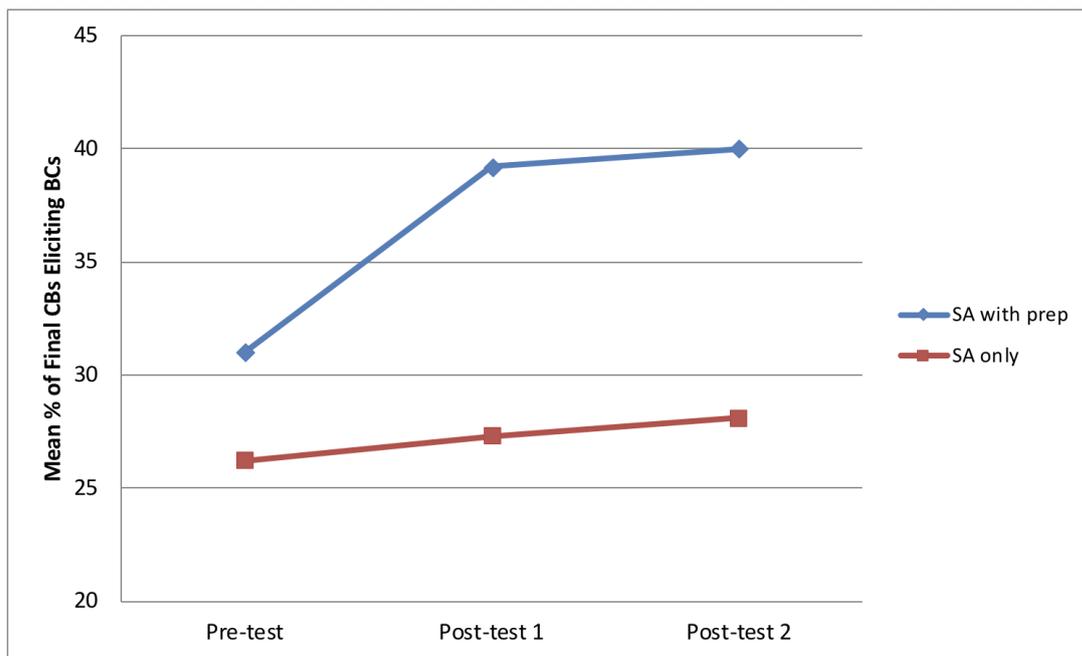


Figure 4. Comparing the proportions of final clause boundaries attracting BCs

Figure 4 demonstrates the differences in how frequently Groups A and B sent backchannels at final clause boundaries. This appears to be yet another area in which Group A made noticeable strides, while Group B did not. The percentage of BCs Group A sent at CBs increased by 8.2% from the Pre-test to Post-test 1 and by 9 from the Pre-test to Post-test 2. In contrast, Group B only increased the percentage of BCs they sent at CBs from the Pre-test to Post-test 1 by 1.09%, and then by 1.89% from the Post-test 1 to the Post-test 2.

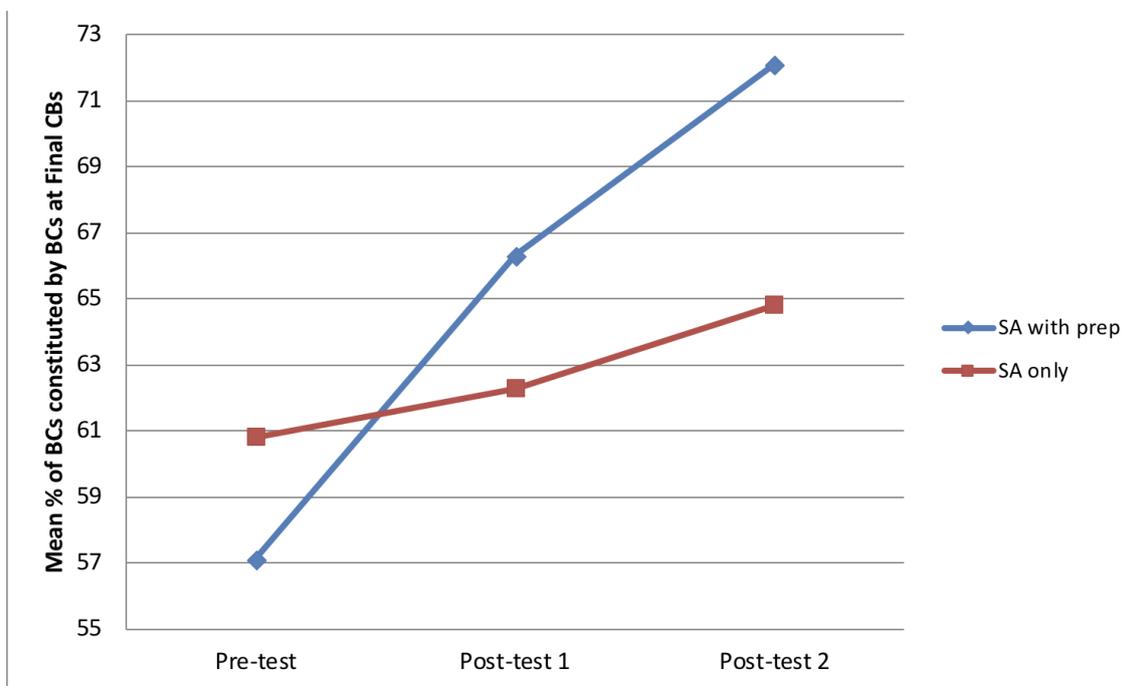


Figure 5. Comparing the proportions of BCs constituted by BCs at final CBs

Figure 5 illustrates the differences in the proportions of Groups A and B's total BCs that were comprised of backchannels sent at final CBs. The results here generally mirrored those above in that while both

groups showed levels of improvement, Group A clearly outperformed Group B. Specifically, the proportions for Group A increased from the Pre-test to Post-tests 1 and 2 by 9.03% and 15% respectively, while they increased for Group B from the Pre-test to Post-tests 1 and 2 only by 1.48% and 4% respectively. It should also be pointed out that the SDs for this category were quite high across the board, which suggests that there is great variance in terms of how individuals make use of discourse contexts favoring backchannels.

6.4 Simultaneous speech backchannels (SSBs)

Tables 9 and 10 respectively display Groups A and B's use of simultaneous speech backchannels (SSBs), which includes the total number of SSBs each group sent, the mean scores and standard deviations of each group, and the mean percentage of total backchannels constituted by SSBs (with SDs) at the time of the Pre-test, Post-test 1 and Post-test 2. Table 9 shows that Group A sent a total of 18 SSBs at the time of the Pre-test, 3 at Post-test 1, and 6 at Post-test 2. Moreover, Group A's mean number of SSBs was 4.5 at the time of the Pre-test, .75 at Post-test 1, and 1.5 at Post-test 2. Lastly, Group A's mean percentage of total backchannels constituted by SSBs was 12.86% at the time of the Pre-test, 5.22% at Post-test 1, and 8.33% at Post-test 2.

Table 9

SSBs of Group A over Time

| N = 10 | Pre-test | | | Post-test 1 | | | Post-test 2 | | |
|--------|----------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| | Total | \bar{x} (SD) | \bar{x} % of BCs (SD) | Total | \bar{x} (SD) | \bar{x} % of BCs (SD) | Total | \bar{x} (SD) | \bar{x} % of BCs (SD) |
| — | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 18 | 4.5 | 12.86 | 3 | .75 | 5.2 | 6 | 1.5 | 8.33 |
| SSBs | | (2.3) | (15.81) | | (.67) | (10.81) | | (1.8) | (7.46) |

Table 10 reports that Group B sent a total of 20 SSBs at the time of the Pre-test, 17 at Post-test 1, and 22 at Post-test 2. Further, Group B's mean number of SSBs was 5 at the time of the Pre-test, 4.28 at Post-test 1, and 5.5 at Post-test 2. Lastly, Group B's mean percentage of total backchannels constituted by SSBs was 15.5% at the time of the Pre-test, 19.31% at Post-test 1, and 22.45% at Post-test 2

Table 10

SSBs of Group B over Time

| N = 10 | Pre-test | | | Post-test 1 | | | Post-test 2 | | |
|--------|----------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------------|-------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| | Total | \bar{x} (SD) | \bar{x} % of BCs (SD) | Total | \bar{x} (SD) | \bar{x} % of BCs (SD) | Total | \bar{x} (SD) | \bar{x} % of BCs (SD) |
| T | | | | | | | | | |
| Total | 20 | 5 | 15.5 | 17 | 4.28 | 19.31 | 22 | 5.5 | 22.45 |
| SSBs | | (1.83) | (24.18) | | (2.96) | (2.49) | | (13.02) | (10.28) |

Figure 6 presents the total number of SSBs used by Groups A and B collectively at the time of the Pre-test, Post-test 1 and Post-test 2. Again, it is clear to see that Group A improved in this area, while Group B did not. Figure 6 shows that the number of SSBs Group A sent from the Pre-test to Post-test 1 and Post-test 2 decreased by 15 and 12 respectively. In contrast, the number of SSBs Group B sent from the Pre-test to Post-test 1 decreased only by .72, and from the Pre-test to Post-test 2 it rose by .5.

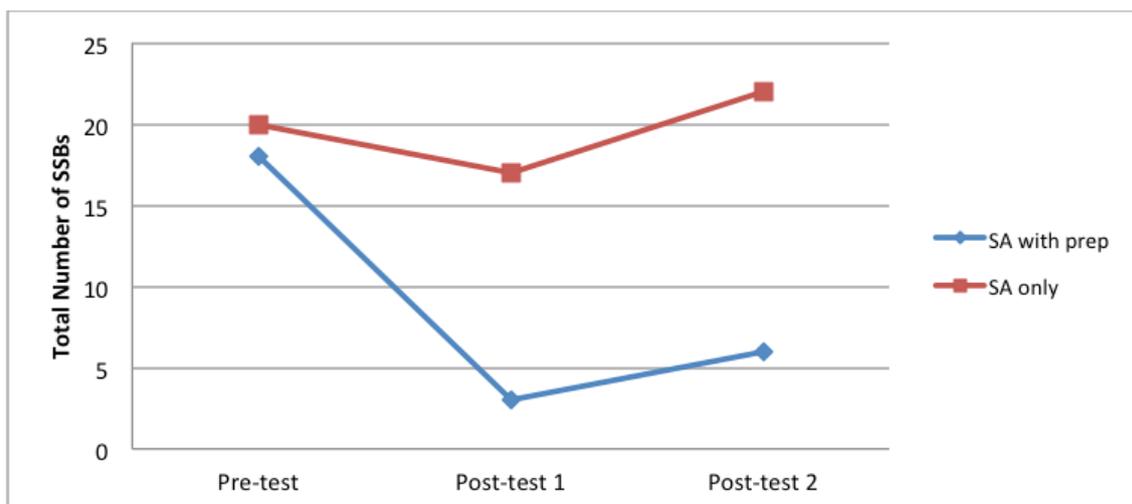


Figure 6. Comparing SSBs between groups A and B over time

Figure 7 compares the percentage of Groups A and B's BCs constituted by SSBs over time. Once again, Group A showed improvement, while Group B did not. Figure 7 shows that the percentage of Group A's BCs constituted by SSBs from the Pre-test to Post-test 1 decreased by 7.66%, and from the Pre-test to Post-test 2 it decreased by 4.53%. In comparison, the percentage of Group B's BCs constituted by SSBs from the Pre-test to Post-test 1 rose by 3.81%, and from the Pre-test to Post-test 2 it rose by 6.95%.

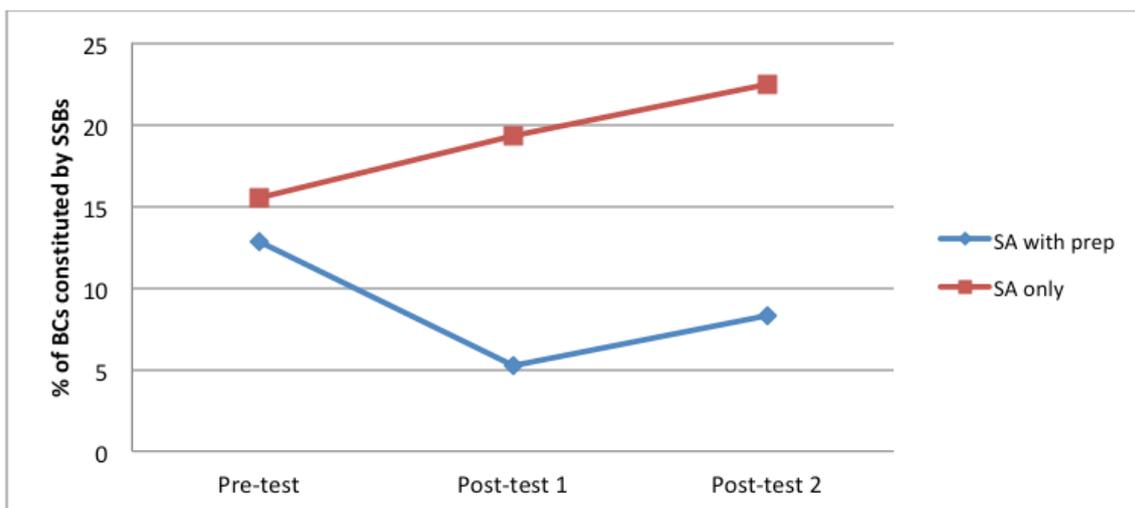


Figure 7. Comparing the proportions of SSBs between groups A and B over time

6.5 Form and function

This section reports on how JEFs reacted in non-understanding situations (NONUs). Such non-understanding situations are recognized when participants acknowledged in retrospective play-back interviews that they did not understand the gist of what their interlocutor was saying (see Section 5.2 for more details). As shown in Table 11, Group A produced unconventional backchannels (such as *yeah, uhum, uhuh, mmm, ahh, right, I agree, I see*, etc) 87.5% of the time they did not understand in the Pre-test, but only 25.7% in Post-test 1 and 42.86% in Post-test 2. Furthermore, regarding the use of conversational repair strategies (CRSs), members of Group A produced minimal repair strategies 12.5% of the time they did not understand in the Pre-test, 28.57% in Post-test 1 and 28.57% in Post-test 2, whereas they did not produce any lengthier expressions as repair strategies when they did not understand

in the Pre-test, but produced them 42.85% of the time they did not understand in Post-test 1 and 28.57% in Post-test 2.

Table 11

Reactions at Points of Non-understanding for Group A over Time

| N = 10 | NONUs | Conversational Repair Strategies | | | | | |
|--------|-------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| | | Unconventional BCs | | Minimal BCs | | Lengthier expressions | |
| | | Total | \bar{x} % of NONUs (SD) | Total | \bar{x} % of NONUs (SD) | Total | \bar{x} % of NONUs (SD) |
| Pre | 8 | 7 | 87.5 (18.8) | 1 | 12.5 (15.51) | 0 | 0 (0) |
| Post 1 | 7 | 2 | 28.57 (33.83) | 2 | 28.57 (20.92) | 3 | 42.86 (37.38) |
| Post 2 | 7 | 3 | 42.86 (38.72) | 2 | 28.57 (32.14) | 2 | 28.57 (39.5) |

As reported in Table 12, Group B produced unconventional backchannels 88.88% of the time they did not understand in the Pre-test, 62.5% in Post-test 1 and 55.55% in Post-test 2. Moreover, concerning the use of conversational repair strategies, members of Group B produced minimal repair strategies 11.12% of the time they did not understand in the Pre-test, 25% in Post-test 1, and 33.33% in Post-test 2, whereas they did not produce any lengthier expressions as repair strategies when they did not understand in the Pre-test, but produced them 12.5% of the time they did not understand in Post-test 1 and 11.12% in Post-test 2.

Table 12

Reactions at Points of Non-understanding for Group B over Time

| N = 10 | NONUs | Conversational Repair Strategies | | | | | |
|--------|-------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|
| | | Unconventional BCs | | Minimal BCs | | Lengthier expressions | |
| | | Total | \bar{x} % of NONUs (SD) | Total | \bar{x} % of NONUs (SD) | Total | \bar{x} % of NONUs (SD) |
| Pre | 9 | 8 | 88.88 (42.04) | 1 | 11.12 (16.12) | 0 | 0 (0) |
| Post 1 | 8 | 5 | 62.5 (40.39) | 2 | 25 (20.64) | 3 | 12.5 (15.92) |
| Post 2 | 9 | 5 | 55.55 (35.87) | 3 | 33.33 (36.82) | 2 | 11.12 (17.02) |

Figures 8, 9 and 10 illustrate the reactions of Groups A and B in situations of NONU collectively. Although Group B was able to show some modest improvements in various aspects of function, this was another category in which Group A outpaced them overall. As shown in Figure 8, both groups used

unconventional BCs in most of the NONUs they experienced in the Pre-test; however, Group A was able to reduce this by 58.93% in Post-test 1 and by 44.64% in Post-test 2, while Group B decreased the percentage of unconventional BCs they sent by 26.38% in Post-test 1 and by 33.33 in Post-test 2.

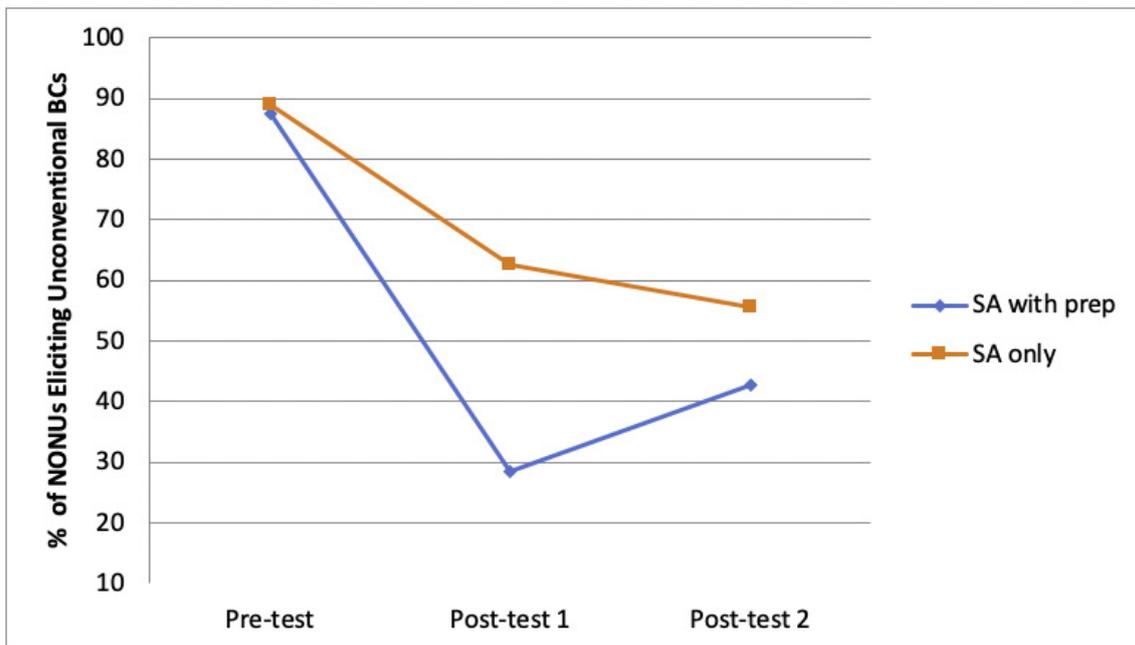


Figure 8. Comparing non-understanding situations eliciting unconventional BCs

Regarding minimal CRSs in situations of NONUs, Figure 9 demonstrates that both groups showed great improvement in this area. From the Pre-test, the percentage of Group A’s minimal CRSs at NONUs increased by 16.07% in both Post-tests 1 and 2. Similarly, from the Pre-test, the percentage of Group B’s minimal CRSs at NONUs increased by 13.88% and 22.21% at Post-tests 1 and 2 respectively.

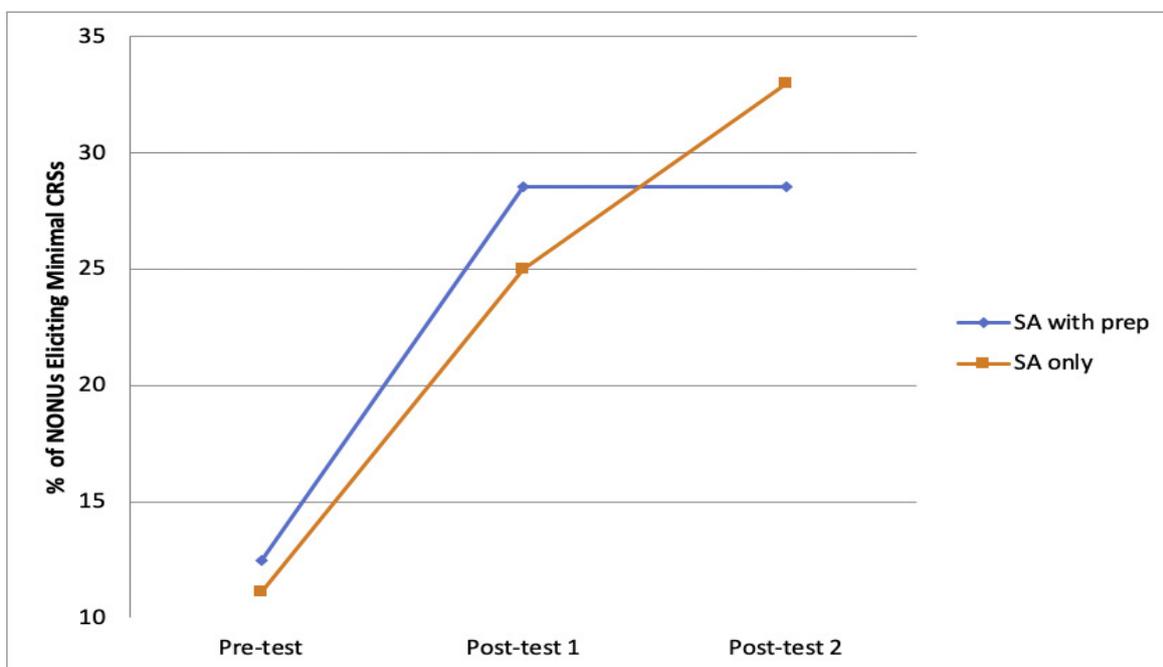


Figure 9. Comparing non-understanding situations eliciting minimal CRSs

Figure 10 presents the frequency in which Groups A and B were able to utilize lengthier CRSs in

situations of NONUs. Group A made noticeable (and sustained) improvements, while Group B registered only modest gains in this area. Specifically, members of Group A were able to increase their percentage of lengthier CRSs in situations of NONUs by 42.86% from the Pre-test to Post-test 1 and by 28.57% from the Pre-test to Post-test 2. In comparison, members of Group B were able to increase their percentage of lengthier CRSs in situations of NONUs by 12.5% from the Pre-test to Post-test 1 and by 11.12% from the Pre-test to Post-test 2.

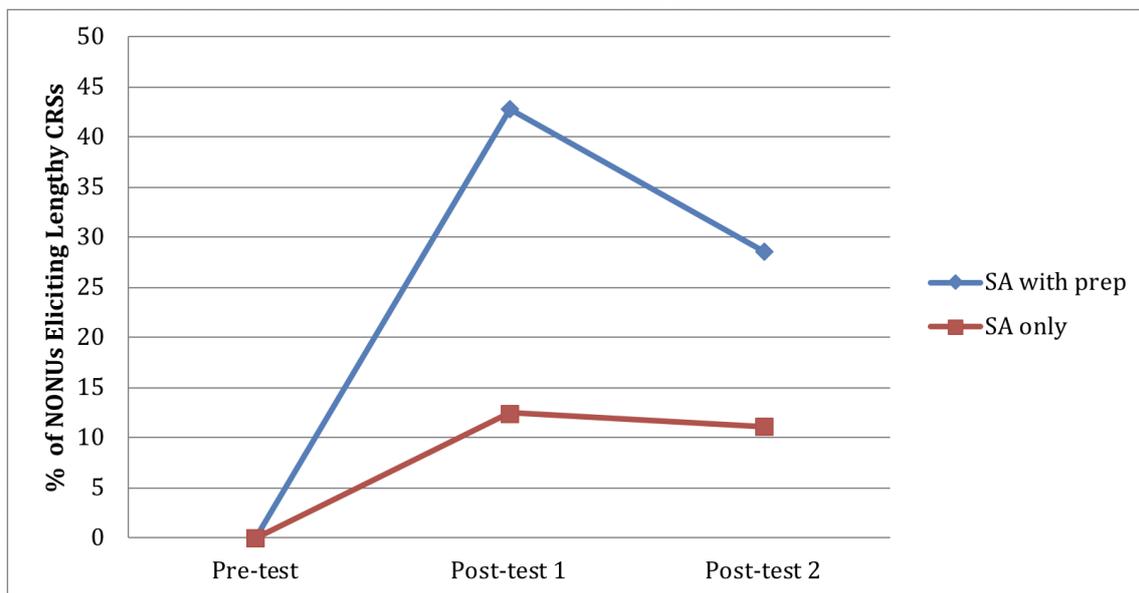


Figure 10. Comparing non-understanding situations eliciting lengthier CRSs

7 Summary and Implications

In summarizing the findings of this study, RQs 1 and 2 are answered in succession below.

RQ 1: What are the effects of long-term study abroad (SA) on the listenership of the Japanese EFL university students (JEFLs) in this study?

From the data produced, it was clear that, regardless of which group they belonged to, study abroad had a positive impact on the JEFLs. Except for the area of simultaneous speech backchannels in which Group A improved but Group B did not, members of both groups showed some level of improvement in all of the other areas examined, such as frequency and variability of backchannels, discourse contexts favoring backchannels, and form and function (in non-understanding situations).

RQ 2: What are the effects of pre-SA instruction on the listenership of the JEFLs in this study upon returning from SA?

While both groups improved in most areas of listenership examined, it was clear to see that Group A, the group that received pre-departure instruction, wholly outpaced Group B, the group that received no instruction prior to departure. The differences were evident in two ways. First, as mentioned above, in the area of SSBs, Group A was able to improve (by sending fewer SSBs overall and a lower percentage of backchannels constituted by SSBs over time), whereas Group B displayed slight regression in this area (by sending slightly more SSBs overall and a higher percentage of backchannels constituted by SSBs over time). Second, in the other areas (frequency, variability, discourse contexts and function) in which both groups showed at least some degree of improvement, Group A's level of improvement was most often far greater and more sustained at the time of the delayed post-test. The only instance Group B outperformed Group A was in one of the three sub-areas of the Function category. That is, Group B was able to apply a greater percentage of minimal repair strategies in situations of non-understanding from the Pre-test to Post-test 2. Considering the overall gains by both groups in this sub-area were >15%, the

<5% difference between the two groups at Post-test 2 was thought to be, largely, negligible.

Further, when also considering the other two sub-areas in the Function category (i.e., unconventional backchannels in non-understanding situations, and lengthy repair strategies in non-understanding situations), it was clear to see that Group A outpaced Group B overall in this area, particularly regarding the lengthy repair strategy sub-area. This may be directly attributed to the fact that members of Group A were explicitly taught in their pre-SA instruction how to react (with lengthy repair strategies) in situations of non-understanding, while members of Group B were not. In other words, members of Group B may have realized from living abroad that they should no longer feign understanding in these situations, but they may not have had the skills necessary to produce longer utterances. This is one of the many areas in which further investigation with larger data sets would prove useful.

Accordingly, before discussing any practical implications of this study's findings, the researcher fully acknowledges that is necessary to proceed with extreme caution in arriving at any conclusions and/or generalizations in a study with such a small sample size. The findings of this case study only reflect a small group of Japanese EFL university students majoring in the humanities and clearly cannot be stated to represent JEFs in general. Nonetheless, as discussed in the conclusion below, this does not diminish the importance of this study's findings, as they help shed light on an area of EFL pedagogy previously unexamined and provide researchers with directions for future research.

One such area worthy of more extensive investigation involves ascertaining the effects of pre-SA instruction to students embarking on long-term study abroad. While pre-SA orientations often involve training students in how to navigate everyday life situations abroad, they do not always strategically focus on language and inter-cultural communication. Undoubtedly, practical information about how to survive in a foreign country is invaluable, and the writer is not calling on a substitute to that. Rather, the writer would like to see the practical orientations supplemented with actual language training geared to optimize students' progress while abroad. As this case study has shown, learners can develop their foreign language abilities so much more with pre-SA instruction. In terms of what skills and competencies to target in pre-SA instruction, the results of this study point to the benefits of focusing on pragmatic aspects of language such as Listenership.

Lastly, another possible implication derived from this study is a theoretical one. The fact that Group A, the group that received pre-SA instruction, improved much more than Group B, the group that did not receive pre-SA instruction, would seem to offer support for Schmidt's (1993) Noticing Hypothesis, which stipulates that noticing is necessary for input to become intake, i.e., necessary for foreign language learning. This finding is consistent with several other studies measuring the effects of explicit vis-à-vis implicit methods of instruction on pragmatic competencies that also demonstrated the benefits of explicit instruction in these particular areas (Cutrone, 2016a, Takahashi, 2001, Rose & Ng, 2001). Regarding how to frame pre-SA instruction, much will depend on the goals that institutions and educators have for their students within the constraints of their individual situations. If the focus were Listenership, as it was in this study, the writer would suggest adhering to the following tenets of instruction: make students aware of how listenership can differ across cultures (via videos and discussion), expose students to models demonstrating effective listenership in a host of situations in English, and, ultimately, provide students with ample practice opportunities and subsequent corrective feedback.

8 Conclusion

In conclusion, this study contributes to our understanding of the long-term study abroad experiences of Japanese EFL university learners. The findings of this study suggest that long-term study abroad may have a positive effect on students' pragmatic competence where Listenership is concerned, and that pre-departure instruction in this area may be especially beneficial. Nevertheless, it is necessary to consider any potential limitations of this study. For instance, as mentioned above, this study included only eight

participants, and it is, thus, impossible to make any bold claims and/or to generalize this study's findings to the greater population of JEFLLs. Undoubtedly, individual differences in personality, foreign language learning aptitude, among other factors may have contributed to learning outcomes. Furthermore, due to practical constraints, the researcher was limited to comparing two groups: one who received pre-SA instruction and one who did not. Undoubtedly, to better disentangle the contributions of different variables, it would be useful in the future to compare this data with two other groups of students who stay at home (i.e., do not study abroad): one who receives instruction on listenership and one control who does not. Even with these aforementioned limitations, this study's findings are important in that they have yielded valuable insights into an area of Applied Linguistics that has previously received little attention. The findings of this study, therefore, serve the all-important function of providing a platform for further investigation and diagnosis into this area. Specifically, future studies would do well to investigate a more diverse and larger sample of learners, and it would also be useful to focus on different areas of language development to ascertain how each area may develop differently.

Appendices

Appendix A: Transcription Conventions

- Listener responses are shown in italics below the primary speaker's talk at the point they occurred in the talk.
- To protect the identity of the participants, pseudonyms are used in the speaker labels on the left side of each transcribed line.
- To not confuse readers with the colons that are used for a different purpose described below, the speaker labels will be followed by a semi colon.
- To further preserve anonymity, pseudographs (i.e., notations in parentheses) will be used in instances where participants' private information such as name, address and/or telephone number has been uttered in the conversation.
- Numbers in parentheses indicate elapsed time in hundredths of seconds of pauses occurring in the conversations. Parentheses with a dot (.) indicates a micropause and/or hesitation under .5 seconds. Pauses are timed using transcription software (Praat Version 5.0.18).
- The equal sign "=" indicates *latching* - i.e., no interval between the end of a prior piece of talk and the start of a next piece of talk.
- The beginnings of simultaneous speech utterances are marked by placing a left bracket at each of the points of overlap, and placing the overlapping talk directly beneath the talk it overlaps.
- Right-hand brackets indicate the point at which two simultaneous utterances end.

Metatranscription will be shown as follows:

- Empty parentheses () indicates that part of the transcription which is unintelligible.
- Words between parentheses indicate the transcribers' conjecture at the words or utterances in the conversation that they are not completely certain of.
- Words between double parentheses may indicate comments and/or features of the audio materials other than actual verbalization.
- L stands for laughter.

Other than apostrophes, which are used to show contraction between words, punctuation symbols in these transcriptions are not used as regular English punctuation markers indicating grammatical category. While other, non-regular, grammatical functions are shown by symbols such as slashes and double slashes, other punctuation symbols such as question marks and colons are used to indicate prosodic

features in these transcriptions.

Nonverbal behavior is shown by the symbols indicated below.

- h stands for audible breathing.
- ^ stands for vertical head movement (head nod).
- > stands for horizontal head movement (head shake).
- S stands for smile.
- ” indicates that eyebrows are raised.
- G indicates body or hand gestures.

In cases where nonverbal behavior occurs concurrently with speech, symbols are placed directly above the speech it co-occurs with (instances where two types of nonverbal behavior occur simultaneously are shown by underlining them both). Nonverbal behavior that is continuous and occurs for a period longer than 2 seconds will be noted by signaling the beginning and the end of the behavior in parentheses where it occurs in the conversation.

N.B. The parentheses containing the symbols below are solely used for separation purposes to make them easily identifiable in the specific examples below. Parentheses will not be used in this manner in the transcriptions as they have other specific functions, which have been outlined above.

- A slash (/) marks the grammatical completion point of an internal clausal boundary (i.e., a clause which is continuative).
- Two slashes side by side (//) mark the grammatical completion point of a final clause boundary (i.e., a clause which terminative).
- N.B. A final clause boundary is one that makes complete sense (i.e., fully meaningful) and could end the utterance there. In contrast, an internal clause is one in which the meaning is not complete, and there is a requirement for the utterance to go on in order for the meaning to be complete.
- A question mark (?) at the end of a word and/or utterance indicates a clear rising vocal pitch or intonation (i.e., one that is clearly heard, and is shown to rise by at least 600 Hz using Praat software).
- An inverted question mark (¿) at the end of a word and/or utterance indicates a clear falling pitch or intonation (i.e., one that is clearly heard and is shown to fall by at least 600 Hz using Praat software).
- A colon (:) as in the word “ye:s” indicates the stretching of the sound it follows (i.e., only marked in cases where the stretching was extended greater than .5 seconds).
- A hyphen at the end of an uncompleted word indicates the disfluency of a truncated word. For instance, if the word “bird” were truncated, it may be transcribed as “bir-”.
- A part of a word and/or phrase containing CAPITAL letters indicates that it has been said with increased volume and/or more emphatically than the rest of the phrase (i.e., only marked when the highest point of the stressed part of speech was greater than 10 decibels the lowest part of the surrounding parts of speech).
- The underscore sign (_) indicates that the talk it precedes is low in volume.
- (~) indicates that the talk which follows is consistent with the person’s regular voice and tone. This symbol is to be used after low volume talk to indicate the point in which the volume rises back to normal. When a pause occurs after the low volume talk and the talk that follows returns to normal, this symbol will not be shown.

Appendix B: A Sample Excerpt of a Transcribed Recorded Conversation

1. Masayuki; okay um im interested in watching (a show) called white collar// (.)

“
oh yeah?”

2. Masayuki; (.) ya () guy’s name uh the guy who went jail// but he is clever// (.)

^
right

G

3. Masayuki; uh matt bon matt bon uh near near caffrey// =

S
= near caffrey? (.)

G

4. Masayuki; i love it L // and i got interesting uh interested in ya english drama //(.) (.97) and

^^
L cool

5. Masayuki; ya i kind of like the story// uh i also learn english about using the ya// (.)

^^ ^^

6. Fred; that’s the [best] way to learn English/ [is] if you enjoy what you doing// = and

^^ ^^ ^
[m] [un] = ya =

7. Fred; you learn naturally// (.) without studying// [you] know grammar or something//

^^ ^^
(.) uhuh [so so]

((beginning G))

8. Fred; which doesn’t feel like hard work// [and you] can study a [lot]/ without realizing it// =

[yeah yeah] [m] = yeah
((ending G)) GS

9. Fred; you are improving// [so] good for you// how do you study/ um you just just watch

S ^
[ya]

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