

《論文》

# 流通経済大学生と南オレゴン大学生の 授業内交流の調査結果報告

長谷川 由貴

The Analysis of RKU Students' Experiences of Interacting with SOU Students

Yuki HASEGAWA

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## Abstract

Since 2016, Ryutsu Keizai University (RKU) hosts five students from South Oregon University (SOU), U.S., for two weeks as a cultural exchange program. During the time of their stay, SOU students spend most of their time on campus visiting classes and interacting with RKU students. After interacting with the SOU students through a class visit, a questionnaire made by the International Affairs Office of RKU was given to the RKU students to learn about their experiences. In this study, responses of three of the classes, that interacted with the SOU students have been looked into separately for in-depth analysis of students' experiences through interaction with the SOU students during class visits. The aim of the study is to find out whether there are any change in students' opinions and motivation toward learning English after interacting with the SOU students. In the study, three classes that had different activities on the day of the class visit are described. Although the class size and student demographics differ among those three classes, the researcher identifies some differences and similarities among students' opinions based on the responses. From the findings, suggestions of activities for future SOU students' class visits that may possibly be effective for RKU students are made.

## Setting of the Study

The cultural exchange program between Ryutsu Keizai University (RKU) and the South Oregon University (SOU) in the U.S. started as one of the commemorative events of the 50<sup>th</sup> year anniversary of RKU. Since 2016, RKU hosts five students from SOU for two weeks in June. This program is expected to continue for five years.

One of the aims of this program is to let the students in both universities to form a friendship and understanding between the two countries. It is also hoped that students of RKU to become more interested in studying abroad by interacting with students of their age from a different country.

Among the SOU students who applied for the program, five students were chosen based on their background and interest toward Japan. Most of the students have never visited Japan before or studied about Japan. The students' majors in their university vary widely and none of them major in Japanese Study or the language. It can be assumed that their prior knowledge about Japan is not very much. For many of them, it is even their first time to travel abroad. However, the students are highly motivated to learn about Japan and are eager to get to know about RKU and the students.

During their two weeks of stay in Japan, the SOU students spent the first week at Ryugasaki campus and the second week at Shin-Matsudo campus. In both campuses, SOU

students interact with RKU students through various activities such as welcome events, visiting classes and club activities, doing homestay, going on a daytrip, experiencing Japanese culture, and so on. However, most of the RKU students only had a chance to interact with the SOU students through a class visit. Thus, it seemed important to make the most of the time of class visits in order to fulfill the aim of this cultural exchange.

To learn about RKU students' opinions and thoughts toward interaction with SOU students, the International Affairs Office which is in charge of this exchange program, gave out a questionnaire to the students who participated in the class visit activity. The questionnaire consists of five sections with 15 questions (See Appendix 1 for the full questionnaire). The questions included items such as students' involvement to the program, their experiences in the class visit activity, their motivation for studying English, and opinions for the next visit. The questionnaire was paper-based and given out to the students in the following class after the visit. The original questionnaire is written in Japanese. The responses were collected and analyzed by the International Affairs Office, but the responses were only looked into as a whole. In every class that hosted SOU students, the activities were different. It can be assumed that students' impressions and thoughts would differ among the classes depending on the kinds of activities that they experienced.

This study focuses on the three sets of results of the questionnaire given to the

RKU students after interacting with the SOU students through classroom visits. After describing the context and participants of each class, analysis of the questionnaire data are given, followed by a discussion of findings. Finally, suggestions for classroom activities when SOU students visit in the future are given, based on the interpretation of the data.

## Context and Participants

In this section, the context and student demographic of the three classes that had classroom visit event by SOU students will be described. In the first two of the classes described, the main instructor is the author of this paper. In the third class, the class is team-taught by an American teacher and the author of this paper. In addition to the classroom context, the activities in the classroom will be described as well as how the activity went and the students' reactions.

### 1) Class 1: General English Class

In this class, the focus is mainly on speaking and listening of daily conversation. The textbook used in this class focus on conversations of university students in their everyday life. Although there are some differences of English proficiency level, the students' levels are mostly in the low-intermediate to intermediate. There are 25 students in total and the class meets once a week. This class is a required class for sophomore students, which means that

students must take this class in order to graduate. Therefore, students' motivation toward learning English varies widely. Some students are enthusiastic and motivated to learn English while others do not enjoy or see the need of studying English very much.

During the class visit, students were divided into five groups of four to five students. After SOU students gave a brief self-introduction, each group was joined by one of the SOU student. When a SOU student joined the group, the students introduced themselves to each other. Then, each group were given a set of question cards which had daily conversation topics such as, "What is your favorite sport?", "Do you live alone or with your family?", "How long does it take you to get to school?", and so on. There were about 30 cards in total, and students took turns to pick one and answer. For every card, all members of the group were supposed to answer before moving on to the next card. The activity continued for about an hour.

Before the class visit event, the students in this class had a chance to see and practice answering the cards during class. This was to help them prepare for the event so they know what the topics will be, look up any unknown words and think of their answers in English beforehand. During the activity, the instructor walked around the classroom to offer any help if needed.

After about ten minutes, SOU students were asked to move to a different group. By doing this, students were able to meet all

SOU students for interaction. Among the SOU students, some students were more outgoing while some were quieter. By interacting with all the students, the RKU students had a chance to realize that there are many different types of personalities among Americans just like Japanese.

At the beginning of the activity, some students seemed a little nervous about using English. For many students, it was their first time to talk to foreigners who are close to their age. However, after a while, students became more used to using English and more comfortable interacting with SOU students. When there was a difficulty in communication, many used their smart phones to look up for words, used gestures and pictures, or asked for help from other members of the group. When the topic was about their favorite actors or actresses, pets, or sports player, students often shared a photo which helped the communication to go smoother.

Overall, the activity went smoothly. Even for students whose English is not so fluent, being able to use pictures or getting help from other students or the SOU student in the group encouraged them to communicate in English. Often times, the researcher witnessed a situation where a topic was such great interest to both RKU and SOU students that they continued to talk about the topic for a long time. For example, an SOU student was showing a picture of her dogs, and all other students were showing pictures of their own pets. The conversation became more in-depth

than just asking one another whether they have a pet or not.

In addition, there were other times when the conversation went off from the original topic but because the topic was of students' interest, the students were able to continue the conversation. For example, in one group, the students started to talk about whether they have boyfriends or girlfriends. This topic was not in the question cards, but students enjoyed talking about this topic for quite a long time. The conversation eventually grew into discussing about cultural differences between Japan and the U.S. of how university students start dating.

In the questionnaire, there were students' comments such as, "I wanted to talk longer" or "the time seemed to pass so quickly" (original comments in Japanese). On informal conversations after class, some students expressed how fun it was to meet and talk with SOU students. From these accounts, it can be inferred that students generally enjoyed their time of interacting with the SOU students through this activity.

## **2) Class 2: English Communication Class**

In this class, the focus is mainly on speaking and listening to English. This class is a required class for students who receive special scholarship. The scholarship that they receive is only granted to about 30 students each year. This special scholarship allows students to pay most of their educational fees. It is renewed every year, which means that

students must keep high GPA in order to keep the scholarship. Therefore, students in this class are mostly hardworking and willing to learn. However, because this class is a required class, not all students are interested in learning English. Some students do not see the need to learn English, so high GPA does not equal high motivation for learning English. There were only seven students in this class and the students are all freshman.

During this class, an instructor of Project Adventure class joined in to try out an activity using the project adventure course on campus. According to the homepage of Project Adventure, Inc., "Project Adventure provides the teaching and integration of social and emotional competencies through engaged, experiential learning activities." (Retrieved Nov. 28, 2017) In a Project Adventure class, students try various kinds of problem solving tasks. Much communication is required and students must cooperate with one another to solve problems. After the task, students reflect on their actions and thoughts. This also requires language skills because students need to express themselves by speaking or in writing.

One of the reasons for incorporating Project Adventure to this class visit activity was because many of the students in this class are in the department of Sport and Communication. The Project Adventure is a course created especially for this department, and some of the students from this English class are taking the course. Thus, it was

thought to be a good opportunity for students to try out their communication skill that they learned through the Project Adventure class with students who only speak English.

The class was held outside using the special wooden framed athletic structure called the "Project Adventure course". Because the instructor of Project Adventure does not speak English, the writer of this paper worked as a interpreter to give instructions to students. Students were given some challenges such as trying to line themselves up on a log bridge, then, changing their positions to alphabetical order according to their first letter in their first names. Students had to ask each other names and also help each other to alternate their positions on the log without falling off from it. Another example of challenge using the Project Adventure course is students Tarzan-roping from one spot to a different spot. The rule was not to fall at any point of the activity and everyone had to fit on to the small spot at the end. Again, this activity required much cooperation and students supported one another to complete the challenge successfully. Including the abovementioned challenges and some other challenges using the Project Adventure course, the class spent about an hour on the activity.

During the activity, all students participated actively. It seemed that one of the SOU students seemed more dominant than others in deciding how to solve the problems. However, the dominant student took in other student's opinions as well, so there

seemed to be no serious disagreements. From monitoring the students, it seemed that students used more of non-verbal skills such as gestures to communicate than actually speaking in English. Some of the students only followed what was decided and didn't have to speak very much in order to accomplish the challenge. The activity allowed students to cooperate physically and to use different ways of communication, and it can be inferred that this helped to make the students become closer to one another.

### **3) Class 3: English Class**

The final English class is a class that is aimed to help students learn English related to sports and body movements. The class focuses on all four skills of English; speaking, listening, reading, and writing, with more emphasis on speaking and listening. The students are all freshman from the Department of Sport and Communication. This class is one of the mandatory elective courses. This means that students are given some choice of classes, but must choose a class from among the given choices. The course is team-taught by an American teacher and the writer of this paper. Most of the students have some motivation and eagerness to become a better English speaker, and the level of students' English is in a lower intermediate. Because the students are all from a same department, they are familiar with one another which make the class atmosphere very lively.

In this class, the students first interacted

with the SOU students using the same question cards and procedure as described in Class 1 of this paper. The students quickly became friendly with one another although there were more difficulties with communicating in English than in Class 1. This could be due to the fact that SOU students got more used to the activity than in Class 1, and also, it seemed that the students in this class were not afraid to make mistakes. The conversation activity went on for about 30 minutes.

After the conversation activity, the students tried the "Marshmallow Challenge". The Marshmallow Challenge is a team activity created by Tom Wujec of TED Talk. The goal of the Marshmallow Challenge is "to create a tallest freestanding structure" using a marshmallow, spaghetti sticks, a string, and a yard of tape (Retrieved November 29, 2017). The group needs to communicate their ideas well and cooperate in creating the structure. The time given to build the structure was 18 minutes, and later, about 15 minutes were spent to reflect on the activity.

For all students, this was their first time to try the Marshmallow Challenge. Some of the SOU students have heard about it, but they have never tried it. It seemed that all groups cooperated well with their group members to create a structure. In many of the groups, the dominant one who suggested ideas was usually the SOU student, but RKU students also tried to give ideas and suggestions. However, because of their English level, the communication relied on gestures and other

non-verbal communication methods. Some of the students spoke very little during the activity. This challenge was very unique in a way that students competed against other groups and students had to convey their ideas and cooperate in order to complete the challenge successfully. The students generally enjoyed the challenge, but some students commented in the questionnaire that they “wanted to talk more than work on a Marshmallow Challenge” (original response in Japanese).

## Results and Findings

In part four of the questionnaire, 11 items asked the students’ experiences regarding their interaction with the SOU students and their opinions and motivation toward English learning. The students were to indicate their response on the Likert scale to the statements that were given. The Likert scale used in this questionnaire was a five-point scale from one

being “agree”, two being “somewhat agree”, three being “neutral”, four being “somewhat disagree”, and five being “disagree”. In this section of the paper, the responses of this part will be analyzed to look into students’ experiences of interacting with the SOU students.

In Class 1, where students focused mainly on conversation activity, it seems that students were generally satisfied that they were able to make themselves understood (see figure 1). There are only a few students who indicate that they did not want to speak in English or that it was a pain having to speak in English. The negative feeling toward learning English may have stayed the same for most of the students, but the fact that 15 out of 19 students claimed that they want to study English more seems to be notable. Although the students’ willingness to go study abroad remains somewhat dispersed, eight out of 19 students seem to feel that they want to go study abroad more than before. This could be due

Figure 1: Class 1

Class 1		1	2	3	4	5
1	I was able to make myself understood pretty well	8	5	5	0	1
2	I was happy that my English was understood	10	5	4	0	0
3	I regret that my English wasn't understood	6	7	4	0	1
4	My negativity toward learning English was lowered	5	3	9	1	1
5	I wanted to study English more	9	6	4	0	0
6	I didn't want to speak in English	0	3	2	4	10
7	It was a burden to speak in English	0	1	4	6	8
8	I wanted to speak more	6	5	6	2	0
9	I couldn't bring myself to talk to the students	1	1	6	4	7
10	I was able to speak if it's with my friends	3	6	8	2	0
11	I felt that I want to go study abroad	7	1	7	4	0

to the fact that interacting with university students of foreign country made them more interested in seeing what is outside of Japan.

In Class 2, where students tried the Project Adventure activity, more students felt that their English wasn't understood or remains uncertain than those who felt that their English was understood (see figure 2). Although students showed willingness to use English, five out of seven students claim that it was a burden to speak in English. This could be due to the fact that students had to communicate

in English in an unfamiliar situation. Students may not have had the vocabulary to express their ideas or thoughts well enough in English.

In addition, the Project Adventure required students to be physically active. It can be inferred that for some students who are not as athletic as the other students felt difficulty in accomplishing the task. These may have had some impact on the students' motivation to study English or negativity toward learning English. On items four and five, students' responses were dispersed. However, six out

Figure 2: Class 2

Class 2		1	2	3	4	5
1	I was able to make myself understood pretty well	1	1	2	0	3
2	I was happy that my English was understood	3	2	2	0	0
3	I regret that my English wasn't understood	1	1	2	1	2
4	My negativity toward learning English was lowered	2	1	4	0	0
5	I wanted to study English more	0	2	2	2	1
6	I didn't want to speak in English	1	0	2	4	0
7	It was a burden to speak in English	3	2	1	1	0
8	I wanted to speak more	0	3	1	1	2
9	I couldn't bring myself to talk to the students	1	4	2	0	0
10	I was able to speak if it's with my friends	1	2	4	0	0
11	I felt that I want to go study abroad	3	3	1	0	0

Figure 3: Class 3

Class 3		1	2	3	4	5
1	I was able to make myself understood pretty well	4	1	2	0	2
2	I was happy that my English was understood	4	3	1	0	1
3	I regret that my English wasn't understood	1	2	1	3	2
4	My negativity toward learning English was lowered	3	0	3	3	0
5	I wanted to study English more	0	2	1	3	3
6	I didn't want to speak in English	1	1	1	1	5
7	It was a burden to speak in English	3	1	2	2	1
8	I wanted to speak more	1	0	4	2	2
9	I couldn't bring myself to talk to the students	2	1	3	2	1
10	I was able to speak if it's with my friends	4	1	3	1	0
11	I felt that I want to go study abroad	3	2	1	2	1



of seven students claim that they would like to go study abroad. By working on some challenging tasks together with the SOU students, students may have become interested in meeting people in a different country.

In Class 3, where students tried both the conversation activity and the Marshmallow Challenge, many feel happy that their English was understood (see figure 3). However, although students didn't mind speaking in English, their willingness to study English and willingness to speak remained unchanged. Similar to Class 2, students may have felt difficulty in expressing their opinions in an unfamiliar situation. They may not have had the vocabulary that they need or was not very sure of the rules for Marshmallow Challenge. Still, five out of nine students claimed that they would like to go study abroad possibly from the same reason as Class 2.

## Conclusions and Suggestions for Future Activities

In the three classes described in this paper, numbers of students and student demographics differ. To summarize, in Class 1, the students are sophomores and participated in conversation activity in which they had a chance to practice before the visit by SOU students. In Class 2, students are freshman and participated in Project Adventure where they worked together to accomplish some problem-solving tasks. The class was held outside and used the Project

Adventure course which resembles an athletic course. In Class 3, students are freshman and participated in the conversation activity and the Marshmallow Challenge.

As mentioned earlier, because of the difference in class size and student demographics, it is difficult to make any definite conclusions from this study. However, three inferences can be made from the findings of the questionnaire responses and from watching all three of the classes interact with SOU students.

First of all, students feel more comfortable and confident to communicate when the task is something that they have practiced before. In Class 1, students had a chance to see the question cards and prepare before meeting the SOU students. However, in Class 2 and 3, students had to try something that was unfamiliar to them without any preparation.

Secondly, many students do not mind speaking in English. As the responses in item six suggest, students are open to using English. In other words, they have not closed themselves off from using English. Although many students often claim that they do not like studying or using English, there is a possibility that students will become more interested in using English if there are opportunities that captures their interest. This could lead to more growth in motivation for learning English.

Thirdly, it seems to be that when a cultural exchange factor is involved, many students become interested in studying abroad. In the case of SOU students visiting the classes, RKU students had an opportunity to meet students

who are close to their age. By communicating with students who are in a similar situation, it is not difficult to imagine RKU students becoming interested in the SOU students' culture and the country as well.

Going back to the aims of this cultural exchange between RKU and SOU, it seems to be that formation of friendship has already been accomplished. Both SOU and RKU students claimed that they had a good time talking to one another and wished that they could do it again. After each class visit, students often exchanged their SNS accounts, such as Facebook and Instagram, so they could keep in touch. Another aim of making students more interested in studying abroad is also accomplished to some extent. If a flyer or an email regarding study abroad programs could go out right after the class visit while students' interest is high, it may be possible that there would be more students willing to participate in the study abroad programs.

As for the suggestions in future activities in SOU class visits, a conversation activity using

question cards would work well. There would be chances for all students to express their ideas and thoughts. When the task is practiced before the visit, students can be prepared and feel more confident in speaking.

However, in real life situations, conversations happen on the spot and students do not have time to prepare an answer or to look up a dictionary. To make account of that factor, a task-based activity would be helpful. The task should not be too complicated or long and it should require everyone's participation and input. It may also be a good idea to involve the students for their input on ideas for activities. By combining a rehearsed activity and unrehearsed task-based activity that requires much participation, students will possibly benefit the most from opportunities of class visits.

## References

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Appendix 1

JAPAN EXCHANGE PROGRAM @ RKU (RKU 交流プログラム) アンケート 2017年7月

RKU 交流プログラムのため、SOU (南オレゴン大学) 学生が6月20日～7月1日まで本学に滞在しました。皆さんのおかげで、充実したプログラムとなりましたこと、お礼申し上げます。

SOU 学生と交流してどうだったか、みなさんの意見をお聞かせください。結果は統計的に処理・分析し、プログラム向上の目的にのみ使用します。ご協力よろしく願います。

国際交流センター

※あてはまる番号を○で囲んでください。

(1) あなたが SOU 学生と交流したのは次のどれですか。あてはまるもの全部に○をつけてください。

1. 授業時間                      2. イベント (歓迎会・送別会など)                      3. その他 (休み時間等)

(2) あなたは自分から SOU 学生に話しかけましたか。

1. 話しかけた                      2. 話しかけなかった                      3. どちらともいえない

(3) あなたは SOU の学生から話しかけられましたか。

1. 話しかけられた                      2. 話しかけられなかった                      3. どちらともいえない

(4) SOU 学生と交流してみてどうでしたか。一番近い位置の | を○で囲んでください。

1. 思う                                      3. どちらともいえない                                      5. 思わない

意外と通じた	_____	_____	_____	_____
英語が通じてうれしかった	_____	_____	_____	_____
英語が通じなくて悔しかった	_____	_____	_____	_____
英語への苦手意識が減った	_____	_____	_____	_____
英語を勉強したくなった	_____	_____	_____	_____
英語で話すのは嫌だった	_____	_____	_____	_____
英語で話すのは苦痛だった	_____	_____	_____	_____
もっと長く話したかった	_____	_____	_____	_____
話しかける勇気がなかった	_____	_____	_____	_____

友人といっしょなら話せた | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |  
留学したくなった | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ | \_\_\_\_\_ |

- (5) SOU 学生との交流について、意見、感想、質問等、自由にお聞かせください。  
また、こんなプログラムがあったらもっと参加してみたいというアイデアなどありましたら  
合わせてお聞かせ下さい。

- (6) あなたの所属学科、学年、性別を教えてください。

\_\_\_\_\_ 学科 \_\_\_\_\_ 年 性別 ( 男  
女 )