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STUDENT LEARNING, CHILDHOOD & VOICES | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Enhancing integrative motivation: The Japanese-American Collaborative Learning Project

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Abstract: The Collaborative Learning Project is a language exchange program in which American and Japanese university students have the opportunity to interact with native speakers over the course of a three-week period. This paper reports the outcomes of the Collaborative Learning Project in terms of its effectiveness in fulfilling student expectations and their integrative motivation, i.e. social and cultural motivation. Using quantitative and qualitative data, this research includes the first project (2012) as a preliminary study, and the second project (2013) as the basis of the formative assessment. In their responses to questionnaires, the majority of the students reported that the program fulfilled their expectations and fostered their integrative motivation. After participating in the project, the participants were motivated to continue learning Japanese and seemed to be more interested in the study abroad program/studying abroad.

Subjects: Applied Linguistics; Language Acquisition; Motivation

Keywords: foreign language learning; Integrative motivation; language exchange; pen pal; study abroad

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Fumie Kato, PhD, is an associate professor in the Department of Languages and Culture Studies, at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Her expertise lies in applied linguistics, specifically second language acquisition, student motivation and learning strategies. Providing foreign language learners with an authentic learning environment is vital to increase learners' motivation. However, if the foreign language learners live in a place where there is minimal need for the use of their target language on a daily basis and they have fewer opportunities to meet with native speakers, it is challenging for instructors to address this important issue. This paper illustrates how instructors can introduce the authentic learning situation into their courses to enhance the student motivation level. Similar projects may be considered during different periods or in collaboration with different universities.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Providing foreign language learners with an authentic learning environment is vital to increase learners' foreign language interests and also heighten their motivation levels. As Japanese is categorized as one of the most difficult foreign languages to master, enhancing learners' motivation is a focal point emphasized to foster their continuous learning. In the Collaborative Learning Project, American and Japanese university students took part in a language exchange program over the course of a three-week period. American participants' expectations were fulfilled by this project; they benefitted immensely from interacting with the Japanese university students in their home country, which, in turn, heightened their motivation to learn Japanese. This motivation may have influenced the increase in number of participants in the Japanese study abroad program. While this study reported findings from a program between Japanese and American students, the program model could easily be adapted to fit other languages and other countries.

1. Introduction

This paper analyzes the Collaborative Learning Project, in which American and Japanese students interact at an American university for three weeks. In this program, study abroad students from Sophia University in Japan visit the University of North Carolina at Charlotte (henceforth, “UNC Charlotte”), giving them the opportunity to be immersed in American society and improve their English language proficiency. Likewise, students at UNC Charlotte practice their Japanese language skills by joining in activities with students from Sophia University, thereby enhancing their motivation to learn Japanese.

Unless specific activities have been arranged beforehand, it is generally difficult for visiting students to have sufficient opportunity to interact with their native counterparts when taking part in a short-term program. Schedules for language learning, both in and out of the classroom, often limit the time visiting students have to find native students with whom they can practice speaking. While students in study abroad programs visit a foreign country in order to immerse themselves in that society, they often spend time only with instructors, caretakers of the program, or other people in the community in planned off-campus social activities.

On the other hand, foreign language students studying in their home country have difficulty finding sufficient opportunities to practice their language of study, especially American students who want to practice with native Japanese speakers. Japanese language students at UNC Charlotte, for example, find few occasions to meet with native Japanese speakers or use their Japanese abilities in their everyday lives. UNC Charlotte is located in Charlotte, North Carolina, an area of the United States where there is minimal need for the use of the Japanese language on a daily basis. In addition, Japanese is a minority among the foreign languages spoken in the southeastern region of the United States. Although students study the Japanese language for a few years at UNC Charlotte, in many cases they have never met a native speaker, and have not had the chance to use the knowledge and language skills they have acquired during their university studies.

Therefore, a short-term language program that brings Japanese students to the United States presents an excellent opportunity for American students to engage with native Japanese students during their visit. It is also an ideal arrangement for Japanese students to be welcomed by American university students when they first arrive in Charlotte. This collaborative learning style is thus considered to be a “win-win” strategy. However, how does this strategy actually affect the participants? While the research includes the experiences of both Japanese and American participants, the emphasis of the research has been placed on the American students due to the unavailability of Japanese student data. The study discussed in this paper was undertaken in order to determine how participants, specifically American students, view this form of language and cultural exchange. This paper reports the outcomes of this exploration of the Collaborative Learning Project conducted in 2012 and 2013 at UNC Charlotte regarding its influence on the enhancement of their motivation to continue their language learning as well as their desire to study abroad in Japan.

2. Background

Many language researchers have identified motivation as one of the most influential factors in foreign language acquisition (e.g. Kato, 2002; MacIntyre & Gardner, 1994; Oxford, 1996; Tremblay & Gardner, 1995). Kato (2007) investigated student motivation among Japanese language learners at UNC Charlotte in 2003. Her research, based on a model including eight different kinds of motivation (*Intrinsic, Integrative, Instrumental, Self-confidence, Anxiety, Motivational strength, Cooperative and Competitive*), found that after *Intrinsic* motivation, i.e. doing things for the enjoyment of it, *Integrative* motivation was the highest form of motivation among language learners.

Integrative motivation and *Instrumental* motivation, which Gardner and Lambert introduced in 1972, relate specifically to language learning. While instrumental motivation involves learning a second language for a practical purpose, such as furthering a career, improving social status, or meeting an educational requirement, integrative motivation refers to identification and desire to

interact with another ethnographic group. Many researchers (e.g. Dörnyei, 2001; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Hernández, 2010; Kato, 2010; Masgoret & Gardner, 2003) have demonstrated that language learners with high integrative motivation focus on developing their language proficiency and “seem to seek out more opportunities to interact with native speakers” (Hernández, 2010, p. 652), and eventually seek out the opportunity of studying abroad.

Since the publication of the results of studies on student motivation in 2003, the Japanese Studies Program at UNC Charlotte has employed several teaching strategies to better fit the needs of students driven by integrative motivation (Kato, 2010). The Collaborative Learning Project, one of these teaching strategies, was developed to enhance students’ integrative motivation. This paper focuses on the 2012 and 2013 versions of the Collaborative Learning Project, which was first implemented in spring of 2012.

As American students of Japanese generally do not have sufficient access to authentic language use in communicative contexts, this project offered opportunities for them to meet with native Japanese university students while in their home country, i.e. the United States. However, because American students had limited time to meet with the Japanese students due to their regular class schedule in the spring semester, the primary purpose of this project for them was not specifically to enhance linguistic abilities, but to provide learners with the opportunity to interact with native Japanese students. This interaction was anticipated to enhance their Japanese learning attitude and their integrative motivation. Martinsen (2008) mentioned that only “cultural sensitivity predicted students’ improvements in language skills” (p. 504), and the study also stated “another important variable in language learning is student motivation” (p. 506).

Focusing on the 2012 and 2013 Collaborative Learning Projects, this paper explains program procedures, analyzes student data, and examines how effectively students were motivated. Furthermore, it explores if heightened integrative motivation influences participation in long-term study abroad programs in Japan. Long-term programs have been proven to impact language learning and “the highest benefits are associated with longer-stays” (Cubillos & Iivento, 2013, p. 50). In addition, this study explores the perspective participants gained by spending time together and how they were motivated in their Japanese learning. Questionnaires and reflection papers were analyzed in order to evaluate if the project fulfilled student expectations.

Two primary research questions are:

- (1) Can the Collaborative Learning Project fulfill student integrative motivation?
- (2) How do the project influence students in their Japanese learning afterwards?

Student data from both the 2012 and 2013 projects were analyzed and interpreted via methodological triangulation, utilizing the outcomes obtained through quantitative and qualitative research methods. On the basis of the formative analysis of the 2012 student data, the revised Collaborative Learning Project was carried out in 2013.

3. Preliminary project in 2012

3.1. Procedures

Participants at UNC Charlotte were learners of Japanese and participants at Sophia University in Japan were students majoring in the Sciences who were interested in improving their English abilities in the United States.

The Japanese Studies Program did not offer a course specifically for the project, and participants in the project attended activities in addition to their regular university schedule. Furthermore, one of the three weeks of the program took place in March during a mid-semester recess, which meant

Table 1. Participants in 2012

2012	UNC Charlotte		Sophia University
63 Students	34 Students:	23 intermediate (F: 11, M: 12)	11 upper intermediate (F: 7, M: 4)
			29 Students (F: 8, M: 21)

Notes: “F” stands for female students, and “M” stands for male students.

many UNC Charlotte students were out of town. Students at UNC Charlotte had to balance the exchange program with their academic responsibilities, and thus the length of their time with native Japanese students was significantly limited. In order to overcome this challenge and use the available time spent together effectively, email correspondence was incorporated into the program. Program participants were encouraged to communicate as pen pals for one month before the visiting students arrived in Charlotte, thus allowing them to get to know each other smoothly over time rather than meeting without any prior knowledge of their counterparts.

3.2. Participants

At the start of the spring semester in January, instructors in intermediate (3rd and 4th semesters) and upper intermediate (5th and 6th semesters) Japanese language courses explained the procedures of the research study conducted in conjunction with the Collaborative Learning Project to all of their students and recruited students who were interested in participating in this project. Consequently, 34 students in intermediate and upper intermediate courses participated in the project. At the beginning of February, an orientation was held to instruct the participants about the project’s procedures and requirements, e.g. correspondence with their partners during February, an overview of the Japanese students’ visit in Charlotte, extracurricular activities, and a preliminary questionnaire about the project afterwards. All of the participants complied with the terms of the project, and agreed to participate in the research study, allowing researchers to utilize their questionnaire responses. Sophia University advertised this project to all of the students majoring in the Sciences in the previous year, i.e. 2011, and the 29 students who applied to this program visited UNC Charlotte in 2012 ($N = 63$). Table 1 below shows the participants.

The American students ranged in age from 20 to 25 years old. All American participants, with the exception of three students from China, were native English speakers and all Japanese participants were native Japanese speakers. The students were divided into 12 pairs and 11 groups of 3. Each pair contained one American and one Japanese student and each group was composed of one Japanese and two American students. All of the participants were instructed to exchange emails with their assigned pen pals using their respective target languages during February.

3.3. Schedules

The Japanese students arrived in Charlotte on 1 March 2012, to a welcome reception with their pen pals from UNC Charlotte. It was the first time all of the participants met with each other after engaging in the pen pal experience for one month. During their time in Charlotte, the Japanese students visited science and technology classes (e.g. Computer Science, Mechanical Engineering), visited local businesses (e.g. The Charlotte Technical Center, Microsoft), and attended sports events (e.g. basketball and ice-hockey games). UNC Charlotte students could not join their peers for all of the events due to their regular class schedules during the semester, and took part in only a few events. Beyond those planned activities, it was up to the American students to spend time together with the Japanese visiting students while accommodating their own schedules. Three weeks later, on 22 March 2012, all of the participants attended a farewell reception.

3.4. Outcomes of the questionnaires (quantitative analysis)

A few days after the project’s end, UNC Charlotte students were required to write reflection papers and respond to a questionnaire developed by the program coordinators. The questionnaire included 12 questions in total, consisting of four “yes” or “no” questions, one five-point Likert-type scale

question ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*), and seven multiple choice questions. Additionally, four demographic questions, i.e. name, current course, instructor, and Japanese partner's name, were included. A total of 30 students (20 intermediate and 10 upper intermediate) responded to the questionnaire out of a possible pool of 34 participants (response rate: 88%). The 12 questions and the number of student responses are shown in Appendix 1.

Three significant questions specifically helpful in evaluating the impact of this project are questions (hereafter "Q(s).") 3, 5, and 12. Table 2 shows the outcomes of the three questions.

Q.3 asked participants if they enjoyed the project. As shown in Table 2, most participants "strongly agreed" with this statement. Q.5 asked if the project met student expectations. Three-quarters of the students agreed. Q.12 asked if students would participate again if offered the opportunity. The majority of the students desired to participate again. The high number of positive responses demonstrates that most of the participants benefited from the first trial of this project. The assumption and analyses leading to this conclusion are found below.

The positive impact of the program is demonstrated most prominently in the participants' focus of study and their enhanced desire to visit Japan. Twenty-six out of thirty-four participants (76%) declared Japanese as their Major or Minor, indicating most of the participant motivation levels in learning Japanese were high. Furthermore, in terms of participant desire to study abroad, as only 3 of the 30 students had been to Japan, over two-thirds reported that they desired to travel to Japan to study in the future.

The Collaborative Learning Project was treated as an additional assignment, and the Japanese Studies Program added one extra point to each participant's final score (perfect score of each course is 100 points). Q.4 asked what motivated the students to participate in the project. Seventy percent of the students responded that their primary motivation was to interact with Japanese students, i.e. integrative motivation, and 60% responded that they wanted to improve their Japanese skills, i.e. instrumental motivation. Approximately a quarter of the students responded that they wanted to receive extra credit. The outcome of this question verified that the students' integrative motivation was strong.

Q.6 asked how many times students corresponded with their partners during February. In the analysis of all responses, the mean was 4.3 times, which indicates that students corresponded approximately once a week.

Table 2. Outcomes of three questions, Q.3, Q.5 and Q.12

Question		2012 (n = 30)	
Q.3: Enjoyed the project	Strongly agree	15	50%
	Agree	10	33%
	Neutral	3	10%
	Disagree	0	
	Strongly disagree	0	
	No answer	2	7%
Q.5: Met expectations	Yes	22	73%
	No	8	27%
	No answer	0	
Q.12: Like to participate again	Yes	28	93%
	No	1	3%
	No answer	1	3%

Table 3. Fourteen categories of student reflection

	Names of categories	Number of comments (n = 21)	Total
Positive comments	1. Met with Japanese students outside of class	15	86
	2. Enjoyed a lot	13	
	3. Exciting pen pal correspondence	13	
	4. Re: language	11	
	5. Like to participate again	8	
	6. Interesting collaborative project	7	
	7. Similarity/difference of taste	7	
	8. Made friends	6	
	9. Enhanced motivation to study abroad	6	
Negative comments	1. Lack of opportunities meeting with Japanese students	8	21
	2. Poor correspondence	4	
	3. Japanese personality	4	
	4. Lack of transportation	2	
	5. Others	3	
	Total	107	107

Q.7 through Q.11 asked how actively UNC Charlotte students participated in the activities planned by the university and social events students coordinated independently. Two-thirds of the UNC Charlotte students joined at least one planned activity over the duration of the project. However, two-thirds of American students also spent time with the Japanese students individually; one half of the students met less than three times and the other half met more than four times, indicating that though UNC Charlotte students were unable to attend many planned activities, they spent time together with the Japanese students outside the class hours, indicating once more high levels of integrative motivation among this population. Their social engagements included eating dinner, going shopping, having coffee, ice skating, watching movies, and playing video games.

3.5. Outcomes of the reflection papers (qualitative analysis)

In total, 21 of 34 students from UNC Charlotte (response rate: 62%) submitted open-ended reflection papers written in English without any constraints aside from being approximately one page in length. These reflective essays were then collected and a conceptually clustered matrix was employed to group students' comments. Researchers then used these clusters to generate student opinions on the program that could be interpreted clearly. In total, 107 student evaluations, including opinions and comments written in the reflection papers, were extracted and clustered into 14 categories. For the purposes of this study, 14 categories are further classified into two groups: positive (nine categories) and negative (five categories) comments. Each group is named under a category header (see Table 3).

3.5.1. Positive comments

Nine categories are included in the positive comments (see Table 3). In total, 86 positive student reflections on this project were recorded.

The majority of the students were excited to spend time with Japanese students outside of the academic setting, indicating once more strong integrative motivation. This outcome coincides with the results collected from the survey above. One student wrote, “We went to Red Robin ... [and we talked] about the differences between American and Japanese women’s personalities.... the night was very interesting all in all.” All of the participants expressed enjoyment in interaction with the Japanese students. Another student wrote, “I invited all of the exchange students to my birthday celebration ... including our 3202 [upper intermediate course] classmates and [we played] games.”

In the second highest category of positive comments, students detailed their excitement about participating in the Collaborative Learning Project. For example one student reported, “I had been crazy excited [about] ... an opportunity to make new friends [from] other countries,” and another student found the result to be an “extremely enjoyable ... an incredibly enriching experience.” The first and the second positive categories verify that the students were pleased to fulfill their high integrative motivation.

The same number of students referred to the pen pal correspondence in a positive manner. Some viewed it as “a very good idea,” and an “interesting experience.” When participants received responses from their partners, they were “very happy,” “excited,” and they “learned a lot about” their pen pal. Through correspondence, students cooperated with one another; one student stated that “[I] helped him with his English, as he helped [me with my] Japanese.” Project participants got in touch even before the Japanese students visited, as demonstrated by the fact that several students “soon became Facebook friends,” and the “[correspondence] helped to form [bonds] between American and Japanese students.” These comments illustrate that corresponding with Japanese students for the first time was a meaningful experience for UNC Charlotte students. It also helped them, who had been studying Japanese for three or four semesters, to satisfy their integrative motivation by providing authentic interactions with native speakers

The fourth largest category of positive responses is comprised of comments on language/reactions to language. This is easily understandable because all of the participants are currently learning foreign languages. It was also the first opportunity for UNC Charlotte students to speak with Japanese university students possessing limited English abilities. Because current Japanese study abroad students learning at UNC Charlotte must demonstrate proficiency by achieving a certain score on the TOEFL exam, most UNC Charlotte students have never met and spoken with native Japanese students whose English abilities are less than fluent. One student stated, “We all struggled through communication with each other.” Another student recorded, “the conversation got awkward just because neither of us really knew what to say.” Gradually the students “managed to understand each other.” One participant noted, “I got to work on my Japanese and they got to work on their English,” and “this was a great experience to help me to try to explain myself in Japanese.” As all of the students lacked proficient language abilities, these reflections indicate that participants tried to do their best in order to communicate with one another. Finally, one American student noted improvement in Japanese students’ English by saying, “their English improved a great deal since the beginning of the program.”

Categories five, six and eight talk about the positive aspects of the project. Many students commented on the value of participation and social interaction with native Japanese students, i.e. integrative motivation. For example, seven students noted that the program was “a great experience” and they “loved having a pen pal”; eight students would “certainly like to participate [in the program] again,” and one student wrote, “this program will be something that I will never forget.” Six of the comments, such as, “I believe we made a lasting friendship,” and “we still wrote even after she returned home,” illustrate the depth of friendships formed in the program.

Category seven mentions the cultural overlap manifested in similarities and differences of students’ tastes. Seven students were excited to discover cultural similarities and differences, and mentioned that they “[had] very similar taste” and watched “a lot of the same anime.” One student

commented that she “enjoyed watching [others’] reactions” to the cultural differences between the United States and Japan. A study conducted by Hernández (2010) shows a positive relationship between motivation, interaction with the culture, and the development of speaking proficiency. The Collaborative Learning Project demonstrates the value of discovering a foreign culture through direct communication, evident in the experiences of the American participants in this program who, by interacting with their Japanese counterparts, learned about the similarities and differences between Japan and America.

As reflected in the ninth category in Table 3, six students’ motivation toward study abroad programs in Japan increased. Student reflections include, “my desire to visit Japan grew and grew,” and “I liked the experience which made me want to go to Japan even more.” The students who wrote these comments later did attend a study abroad program in Japan. One of these students almost gave up the opportunity due to the fact that it was his senior year, but he finally managed to find the time to attend a short-term summer program in Japan. The other student did not initially seem to be interested in the study abroad program in Japan, perhaps due to her Spanish Major. However, surprisingly, she attended the program in Japan for one academic year after participating in this project. Beyond these two students, this project motivated and seemed to influence other participants’ attitudes toward going to Japan as a study abroad student. These students were good examples of how strong integrative motivation can eventually encourage students to seek out the opportunity of a study abroad program (Hernández, 2010).

3.5.2. *Negative comments*

Twenty-one negative comments about the project were extracted in the student reflections. These opinions were clustered into five categories (see Table 3).

As already anticipated the majority of negative comments involved the difficulty of coordinating opportunities to meet with the Japanese students during the spring program. Representative student opinions include, “I was sadly only able to meet with him once ... [as I have] a very busy [schedule],” and “Unfortunately I did not do as many activities with the Japanese students due to work and school schedule.” Though negative, by their regretful sentiment, these reflections confirm that the UNC Charlotte students participating in this program possess strong integrative motivation. Although they were unable to do so, they wanted to spend more time with the Japanese students and seek out interaction with this ethnographic group.

Four students claimed that correspondence with their pen pals was not reciprocal. Students commented, “I emailed him three times and received [an email] back only once,” and “I wrote my pen pal trying my best to write entirely in Japanese. He wrote back two sentences.” Low correspondence rates of Japanese students were found to be caused by their final examination schedules in Japan.

The following two issues were also identified as problematic: (1) lack of transportation and (2) expense of the events. Two students did not have a means of transportation, namely a car, so it was difficult for them to organize a trip with their pen pals. This is understandable, as it is a challenge to go anywhere without a personal vehicle in the Charlotte region. One student said, “A lot of the events did cost quite a lot of money.” This economic issue seemed to prevent him from participating in the events.

4. **Formative evaluation**

Responses to three significant questions, i.e. Qs 3, 5 and 12, and the outcomes of the qualitative analysis indicate that the program in 2012 was handled satisfactorily, although there were areas for improvement. The second project was implemented in 2013 and built upon this critical feedback in order to address the lacking areas.

The 2013 program implemented a new procedure of creating small correspondence groups rather than pairs in order to address the outcomes of the quantitative and qualitative analyses, and in

consideration of the short amount of time allocated for correspondence between pen pals. Furthermore, when the program organized groups in 2013, two issues were considered. One of them was the issue of student access to a personal vehicle because a car is required for traveling around the greater Charlotte metropolitan area. At least one student who owns a car was included in each group. The other issue to consider was the integration of students who return to their hometown and students who remain in Charlotte during spring break. The groups were organized so that the numbers of group members who would be gone was balanced among groups.

Formative evaluation revealed the following suggestions for improving the program in 2013:

- (1) Create small correspondence groups, rather than student pairs, to exchange emails.
- (2) Request each student’s availability during spring break.
- (3) Ask each student if he or she owns a car.
- (4) Integrate spring break availability and transportation options into the formation of groups.

5. Revised project in 2013

5.1. Participants

Through the same methods utilized in 2012, 34 students in intermediate and upper intermediate courses at UNC Charlotte applied for this project and participated in spring 2013. Twenty-three Japanese students majoring in Sciences at Sophia University visited UNC Charlotte. In total, 57 students participated in the Collaborative Learning Project from 1 March through 23 March 2013. American students ranged in age from 20 to 28 years old. All the Japanese participants were native Japanese speakers and all the American participants, with the exception of three students (one each from Vietnam, China, and South Africa), were native English speakers. Table 4 shows the breakdown of 2013 participants.

Eleven groups were formed based on student availability and transportation. All students were required to exchange emails among their group during February 2013.

After the program, all American students responded to the same questionnaires made for this project in 2012. In addition, they were required to submit a reflection paper after completion of the program.

5.2. Comparison of the outcomes of the questionnaires (quantitative analysis)

Student responses were analyzed in comparing of UNC Charlotte student responses in 2012 and 2013. A list of the student questionnaire responses is shown in the Appendix 1. Participants who declared a Japanese Major or Minor in 2013 reflected similar rates to those recorded in 2012. The outcomes of three vital questions, i.e. Q.3, Q.5 and Q.12, in the evaluation of the project are shown in Table 5.

Outcomes of the student responses of only these three significant questions were statistically compared. Q.3 is an ordinal scale and all observations from 2012 and 2013 are independent. Based on these conditions, the Wilcoxon–Mann–Whitney test was conducted to compare the outcomes of Q.3 for 2012 and 2013. The resulting *p*-value from the two-sided test was .2072 (>.05) indicating

Table 4. Participants in 2013

2013	UNC Charlotte		Sophia University
57 Students	34 Students:	19 intermediate (F: 10, M: 9)	15 upper intermediate (F: 8, M: 7)
			23 Students (F: 8, M: 15)

Notes: “F” stands for female students, and “M” stands for male students.

Table 5. Outcomes of three questions, Q.3, Q.5 and Q.12 in 2012 and 2013

Question		2012 (n = 30)		2013 (n = 34)	
Q.3: Enjoyed	Strongly agree	15	50%	23	68%
	Agree	10	33%	10	29%
	Neutral	3	1%	1	3%
	Disagree	0		0	
	Strongly disagree	0		0	
	No answer	2	6%	0	
Q.5: Met expectations*	Yes	22	73%	32	94%
	No	8	27%	1	3%
	No answer			1	3%
Q.12: Participate again	Yes	28	93%	33	97%
	No	1	3%	0	
	No answer	1	3%	1	3%

* $p < .01$.

there was no significant difference between 2012 and 2013 student responses. Since the responses to Qs.5 and 12 are dichotomous variables and the observations for 2012 and 2013 are independent, chi-square tests were conducted. The p -value for the test of Q.5 was .00074 ($<.01$), indicating a significant difference between 2012 and 2013; that is, more students fulfilled their expectations in 2013 compared to 2012. The p -value for the test of Q.12 was .2822 ($>.05$) indicating there was no significant difference between 2012 and 2013 student responses.

Responses to the rest of the questions are shown in the Appendix 1. In terms of correspondence rates (Q.6), participants in 2013 corresponded much more frequently than the students in 2012. Seven participants reported that they exchanged emails “more than fifteen” times and three of them even corresponded “twenty plus” times. One of the strategies implemented in 2013 was to organize participants in small groups rather than in pairs. This strategy seemed to be effective in increasing correspondence rates.

Q.9 through Q.12 asked the participants about which program activities they joined. Comparison of their responses between 2012 and 2013 shows that participants in 2013 attended the events more actively, spent much more time together outside of the events, met the Japanese students more frequently, and took part in other social activities such as bowling, playing video games, and visiting the houses of their pen pals. Increased correspondence rates between participants in 2013 might have stimulated their integrative motivation more than in 2012.

5.3. Outcomes of the reflection papers (qualitative analysis)

The participants at UNC Charlotte were asked to write a reflection following the same procedure implemented in 2012. In total, 29 papers (15 intermediate and 14 upper intermediate) were collected out of the possible pool of 34 (response rate: 82%). In total, 157 evaluations and comments were extracted and clustered following the 14 categories of the 2012 analysis. Furthermore, seven more categories, three positive comments and four suggestions, were added in 2013 for a total of 21 categories. Table 6 displays and compares the 2012 and 2013 student comment results.

Responses for each category are dichotomous variables and the observations for both 2012 and 2013 are independent. Chi-square tests were thus conducted on the 14 categories in order to compare the number of student comments between 2012 and 2013. As the seven categories were newly added in 2013 and could not be compared with the results of the year prior, these were excluded from the comparison test. The results indicate that the three categories found to vary significantly between the student reflections of the two years include “Exciting pen pal correspondence,” “Made

Table 6. Student reflections in 2012 and 2013

	Categories	Comments 2012 (n = 21)	Comments 2013 (n = 29)
Positive comments	1. Met with Japanese students outside of class	15	19
	2. Enjoyed a lot	13	23
	3. Exciting pen pal correspondence**	13	7
	4. Re: language	11	12
	5. Like to participate again	8	12
	6. Interesting collaborative project	7	7
	7. Similarity/difference of taste	7	5
	8. Made friends*	6	17
	9. Enhanced motivation to study abroad*	6	12
	10. Sad to say “Goodbye”	0	7
	11. Gained cultural awareness	0	6
	12. English for the Japanese	0	4
		Sub-total	86
Negative comments	1. Lack of opportunities meeting with Japanese students	8	5
	2. Poor correspondence	4	5
	3. Japanese personality	4	1
	4. Lack of transportation	2	0
	5. Others	3	5
		Sub-total	19
Suggestions	1. Post schedule sooner	0	9
	2. Longer program	0	5
	3. Not groups, but pairs	N/A	3
	4. Others	0	5
		Sub-total	0
	Total	108	157

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

friends” and “Motivation to study abroad” (see Table 6). The results in the remaining 12 categories do not differ between 2012 and 2013.

Within the category “Made friends” ($p = .0354 < .05$), the participants in year 2013 wrote significantly more positive comments about their friendships than those who participated in 2012. Regarding the category “Motivation to study abroad” ($p = .0115 < .05$), although only one student in 2013 mentioned study abroad per se, 11 students wrote that they intended to visit Japanese

Table 7. Study abroad student participation numbers in the Japanese Studies Program at UNC Charlotte

Academic year	'03	'04	'05	'06	'07	'08	'09	'10	'11	'12	'13	'14
Long-term	10	4	11	11	14	13	11	12	16	22	19	21
Short-term						1		2		2	1	3
Total	10	4	11	11	14	14	11	14	16	24	20	24

Note: '03 Indicates the year 2003.

students in Japan and that they had concrete arrangements to go, by stating comments such as, “I have made plans to meet up with them when I visit Tokyo,” and “XX gave me his address in Tokyo ... I need to go and see him ... I could stay at his house and we would ride motorcycles together.” These results suggested that the project in 2013 enhanced American students’ motivation to travel to see their friends in Japan, indicating an increase in integrative motivation (Hernández, 2010).

Since they were successful in forming friendships during this short period, many participants in 2013 were very sad when they attended the farewell party. In one of the new positive comments added in 2013, “Sad to Say ‘Goodbye,’” seven students expressed their sadness by writing comments such as, “Everyone was sad when they had to leave,” and “The last day of the program was surely the saddest. The group of Sophia girls ... nearly shed tears as we said our goodbyes.”

No students in 2013 mentioned the inconvenience of not having their own personal vehicle. This indicates that rather than acting independently, students interacted in groups, which reduced the need to worry about transportation. The program was able to correct the transportation issues from 2012 by including at least one student who had a vehicle in each of the 2013 groups.

Students in 2013 proposed three kinds of suggestions: “Post Schedule Sooner,” “Longer Program” and “Not Groups, but Pairs.” Nine students stated that they could have attended more events if they had received the program agenda in advance, because they could have arranged their schedules accordingly. Comments such as “[We could have been] able to schedule our jobs,” illustrate the students’ concern.

Five students requested that the program be longer than three weeks, as the following comments illustrate: “Three weeks seemed like five days,” and “The program was very short, and I wished we had a longer time to spend with each other.” There were no students in 2012 that commented on the length of the program. These comments indicate how much the participants in 2013 wanted to spend time with the Japanese student and demonstrate strong integrative motivation, manifested in an insistent desire to get to know their peers.

6. Discussion

The revised project was carried out in 2013 on the basis of the preliminary study from 2012. Both quantitative and qualitative student data analyses reveal that the 2013 project was more satisfactorily conducted, for example, students in 2013 corresponded more frequently, attended the events more actively, made friends more closely, and fulfilled their expectation more than the participants in 2012. However, the majority of the students both in 2012 and 2013 found this project offered valuable opportunities for social interaction with native Japanese students. This Collaborative Learning Project found that many students already possessed strong integrative motivation and enhanced it even further by bringing them together with Japanese students for a three-week period in their home country. This outcome is in line with the study of Norris-Holt (2001) who saw students’ motivation elevated after having sessions with the target language group.

In terms of research Q.1, whether the project could meet student integrative motivation, the majority of the participants indicated that the project fulfilled their expectations, i.e. integrative

motivation. Thus, the vast majority would like to participate in the project again if it were to be offered in future.

Regarding research Q.2, i.e. how the project influenced student motivation levels, the project was found to increase students' motivation to learn Japanese continuously and to strengthen students' integrative motivation, specifically in terms of their motivation toward study abroad in Japan. Six students in 2012 wrote about their future study abroad program, and in 2013, 12 students were looking forward to meeting with Japanese friends again in Japan. Table 7 shows the student participation numbers in the Japanese study abroad program from 2003 to 2014.

Twenty of the participants from the Collaborative Learning Project in 2012 and 2013 are included in the above table. In comparing student participation rates in Japanese study abroad programs before and after 2012, student numbers were found to increase slightly after 2012. It is not legitimate to conclude that mere participation in the Collaborative Learning Project directly caused students to attend a study abroad program in Japan. However, the increase of participation in Japanese study abroad programs after 2012 indicates that it is likely that the Collaborative Learning Project influenced student motivation levels and gave them a more positive attitude regarding the idea of studying abroad in Japan.

In terms of student motivation levels toward learning Japanese afterwards, for example, there was only one student who negatively responded to the question regarding whether or not the program had fulfilled his expectations (Q.5) in 2013. He corresponded with his pen pal four times and participated in three events. The "amount of exposure students have to the target language" (Reynolds-Case, 2013, p. 312) is crucial. The limited amount of interaction from three meeting times was not enough to fulfill his expectations. However, he wrote, "(I made) a few good friends with Sophia students ... I hope that I can continue learning more Japanese and more about Japan with them." He responded positively to the question asking if he would like to participate in the project again, indicating his motivation for continuing to learn Japanese was high. Although this student is an example of someone whose expectations were not met, his motivation to learn Japanese afterwards was still enhanced.

7. Conclusion

Providing students with authentic learning opportunities through directly communicating with native speakers and responding to students' high integrative motivation are quite challenging in the environment at UNC Charlotte. Though only a short-term program, the Collaborative Learning Project provided students with an opportunity to socialize and spend valuable time with native Japanese university students. This study has shown that students can enhance and act on their integrative motivation while in their home country. Furthermore, their heightened integrative motivation can increase their desire to attend Japanese study abroad programs.

A limitation of this study though was the time restraint on interactions between students due to the necessity of conducting the program during the semester. Future projects could revise this issue by offering the program in another period in order to lengthen the amount of time students spend together. Also, while this study was conducted on a program facilitating conversation between American and Japanese students, other programs could easily adapt this model to other languages and other countries.

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Appendix 1

Questions and numbers of the responses of the questionnaires

UNC Charlotte students in 2012 ($n = 30$) and 2013 ($n = 34$)

1. Declared Japanese:

1. Major (16)(19) 2. Minor (10)(11) 3. Not Yet (4)(4)

2. Japanese study abroad program:

1. Want to go (21)(6) 2. Went (3)(11)

3. Not interested (4)(15) 4. Others (2)(2)

3. I enjoyed participating in this collaborative learning program:

1. Strongly disagree (0)(0) 2. Disagree (0)(0) 3. Neutral (3)(1)

4. Agree (10)(10) 5. Strongly agree (15)(23) No Answer (2)(0)

4. Why did you participate in this collaborative learning program?

1. Meet Japanese (21)(32) 2. Improve my Japanese skills (18)(15)

3. Get an extra point (7)(3) 4. Others (3)(3)

5. Did this collaborative learning program meet your expectations?

1. Yes(22)(32) 2. No (8)(1)

6. How many times did you correspond (email, Facebook, IM) before your pen pal arrived in Charlotte?

1. Once (2)(**3**) 2. Twice (5)(**3**) 3. Three times (6)(**9**)
4. Four times (5)(**6**) 5. Five times (6)(**2**) 6. Over six times (5)(**10**)

7. How many program-organized events did you attend?

1. Once (12)(**11**) 2. Twice (10)(**6**) 3. Three times (2)(**15**)

8. Did you spend time with the Japanese participants outside of events?

1. Yes (19)(**29**) 2. No (11)(**5**)

9. If yes, how many times did you meet with the Japanese/American participants?

1. Once (2)(**1**) 2. Twice (4)(**8**) 3. Three times (4)(**3**)
4. Four times (7)(**3**) 5. Over five times (3)(**15**) 6. None (10)(**4**)

10. If yes, what did you do with the Japanese participants? Circle the appropriate answer.

1. Went shopping (8)(**18**) 2. Saw a movie (2)(**11**)
3. Ate dinner out (16)(**28**) 4. Went sightseeing (3)(**13**)
5. Went for coffee/snacks (5)(**14**) 6. Ice-skating (4)(**0**)
7. Video game (2)(**2**) 8. Others (8)(**17**)

11. Did you make friends with other Japanese (besides your group) in this program?

1. Yes (23)(**33**) 2. No (7)(**1**)

12. Would you likely participate in this kind of program if offered again?

1. Yes (28)(**33**) 2. No (1)(**0**) No Answer (0)(**1**)

Notes: Number in the first parenthesis shows the number of UNC Charlotte student responses in 2012 and number in bold type font in the second parenthesis shows the number of UNC Charlotte student responses in 2013.



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