

「日本人の学生の留学と異文化間の感受性発達の ケースストーリーの調査」

ラブリーエスター

本稿では、日本人の大学生にフォーカスし、留学の経験が異文化感受性発達にどのような影響を与えるかについて考察する。留学の利点として国際感覚の育成、異文化理解の促進、人脈の拡大を進めることで知られている。しかし、実際に留学の経験について少し不満足という印象を持っている学生もいる。学生をサポートするためにその不満足の理由を調べることが求められる。しかも、留学の経験が異文化間感受性発達の進路の一部だという立場から観察すると、留学について不満足にでも重要な個人的な発達を発見できる。そのために本研究では2016年にアメリカで留学したことがある日本人の大学生を2名募集し、2017年から2018年まで半構造化インタビューを4回行った。最初のインタビューの内容は留学の経験、アメリカの文化の印象、帰国した後の逆カルチャーショックの経験、現在の生活等だった。このように学生の留学行く前の経験と背景について情報を収集することを通して理解できた。それから、帰国した後の就職活動、キャリア進路に併せて、趣味の活動と友人の関係とソーシャルメディアの利用の習慣も含め、研究参加者の話をより深く調査した。結果を発表するためにインタビューの内容をナラティブ分析の方法 (Barkhuizen et al, 2013) を利用して留学と共に学生がどのような異文化間異文化感受性を発達したことを表す目的としてケースストーリーの形で1名の研究参加者について示す。大学の留学に行く前に学校時代に会った外国人から強い影響を受けた。留学に行く前からも、それから留学から帰ってきた後でもよく英語のテレビの番組と外国人のユーチューバーの動画を見た。留学から日本に戻ってきた後で日本の文化と社会的なルールが厳しいと感じた。海外旅行に興味を持つ友達と旅に出てヨーロッパの国の文化に触れ合った。将来のことについて日本を出てアジアの国で生活する希望を述べた。留学の経験以外にも学生の異文化間の経験を全体的に調査するため、本研究の参加者のストーリーから異文化間感受性発達に色々な影響を与える要因が観察できる。

Case story of a Japanese student's study abroad and intercultural development

by Esther Lovely

Introduction

This paper presents and discusses the case story of a Japanese student and her study abroad experience at a university in the U.S. The study abroad program was relatively brief, and seemed to have fallen short of her expectations in several aspects, failing to be the stimulating and transformative experience she had hoped for. When I initially recruited her for the study, she was hesitant to participate, saying that she felt her study abroad experience was a bit “shallow” or “superficial” (浅い). She seemed to think that sharing her experiences would not be worthwhile. However, I assured her that learning about less-than satisfying study abroad experiences could also be a source of valuable insights.

Upon examining her interview responses, at first it seemed that she had gained little from her study abroad. However, the longitudinal approach to the data collection, which included information about her pre-study abroad life and her life post-study abroad, allowed insight into how the study abroad program fit into her long-term journey of intercultural development. By presenting and discussing her case story, I aim to show the value of viewing the short-term study abroad as one of many import-

ant steps in a long-term journey of intercultural identity development (Kim, 2001). This story also demonstrates the need for longitudinal approaches in order to examine the mechanisms of developing intercultural awareness and competence.

Methodology

Participant recruitment

I attended an event for international and local students at T university in November 2017. At this event I was given time to introduce myself and my research and to ask for volunteers who would be willing to talk with me about their intercultural experiences.

Akari¹⁾ was one of several students at the event who came to speak to me. She was accompanied by her classmate Momo. Both of them were months away from graduation and had recently participated in one of T university's study abroad programs. They gave me their LINE contact details, and agreed to meet me to hear more about my project and share their experiences.

Interviewing the participants

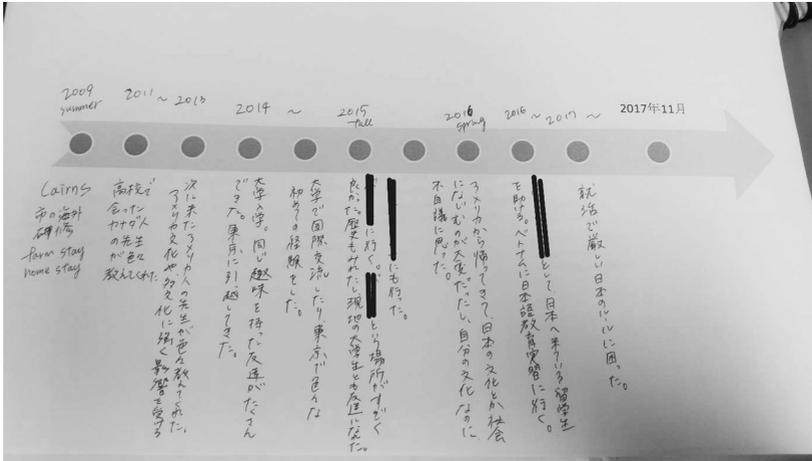
I met with the participants to inform them about the aims and procedure of my project, after which they signed participation consent forms I had prepared. We talked about their backgrounds and study abroad experiences broadly. I then conducted joint interviews in-person with Akari and Momo four more times between November 2017 and

1) Names have been changed to protect participants' privacy.

April 2018. The interviews were conducted in Japanese, with occasional interjections in English for emphasis, humour or clarity. The first three interviews were held in a student lounge on the university campus, and the final interview, held after their graduation, was in a family restaurant in downtown Shibuya.

In order to collect detailed information about the participants' thoughts and feelings about their experiences, the interviews were semi-structured, beginning with broad open-ended questions that allowed participants to speak freely and elaborate on topics as they wished (Silverman, 2013). I asked them to tell me about their previous intercultural experiences such as their foreign language studies, interactions and connections with non-Japanese people or media, and any past trips outside Japan. In subsequent interviews I asked them to tell me about their social networks and communication habits (including engagement with mass media) and meaningful life changes that had occurred since the previous interview. Due to the timing of the interviews, I was able to capture detailed accounts of a period of significant change in their lives as they transitioned from being students to professional working adults.

I audio recorded and summarised the interviews in English in Word documents, with relevant portions being transcribed in Japanese with timestamps added for easy reference. At our initial meeting I also had the participants fill out a simple visual timeline on paper that I had prepared beforehand. Visual timelines have been used as helpful memory aids in qualitative research, as stimulus for asking questions in interviews and to help build rapport between researchers and participants (Olmo-Extremera, M., Fernández-Terol, L., & Montes, D. A., 2024). On



Above: Figure 1. Timeline of major events in Akari's life

these timelines, Momo and Akari wrote down the year of significant life events related to their education and intercultural experiences, accompanied by a brief summary of the event (Figure 1). Momo wrote on her timeline in English, while Akari wrote in Japanese.

Constructing the case stories

Once I had written summaries of the interviews, I read them through multiple times, highlighting portions that were relevant to the research themes. I also relistened to these sections of the audio recordings and transcribed them in order to analyse them more closely. I organised the information into a table, where I separated Akari's responses from Momo's, and added a third column for responses that were shared by both participants. I organised the relevant content of the interviews to create chronological accounts of the participants' experiences. I then

identified significant incidents and meaningful links and patterns that appeared in the interview content and added my interpretation. In this way, the analysis of the information was embedded in the process of constructing the case story (Barkhuizen, 2011; Barkhuizen et al, 2013).

Akari's story

In this section I present Akari's case story in four parts: pre-study abroad, study abroad, immediate post-study abroad, and post-study abroad.

Pre-study abroad

Akari shared that she grew up in the countryside of rural Japan. In 2009 as a second-year middle school student she had the opportunity to travel to Cairns, Australia, where she participated in a week-long homestay and farm stay with a local family. She shared her memory of eating lamingtons²⁾ made by her host mother, and also lamingtons provided at a school event where she had the chance to interact with local elementary school students.

A couple of years later during high school she met and befriended Americans who were working at her school through the JET programme³⁾. On her timeline, she particularly highlighted a Canadian

2) Lamingtons are a common and well-known type of cake in Australia.

3) The Japan Exchange and Teaching (JET) Programme aims to promote internationalisation in Japan's local communities by helping to improve foreign language education and developing international exchange at the grass-roots level. (<https://jetprogramme.org/en/history/>)

teacher who had “taught her various things”, followed by an American teacher who left a strong impression on her. Regarding this teacher’s impact she wrote that she was “strongly influenced” by American culture and multiculturalism - 「次に来たアメリカ人の先生が色々教えてくれた。アメリカ文化や多文化に強く影響を受ける」 (Figure 1).

In 2014 Akari left her family home and moved to Tokyo to study at T university, where she was able to make many friends with whom she had hobbies and interests in common.

When Akari later went to the U.S. for study abroad, she had the opportunity to meet with her American friends, showing that they had formed meaningful connections that motivated them to keep in touch for several years.

We can see that prior to her study abroad, Akari had had interactions which had developed her intercultural awareness and knowledge, and which she acknowledged had a significant impact on her.

Study abroad experience

Before going to study abroad, Akari took a university class on American history and culture. Reflecting on the class, she said “It was better than knowing nothing”, and it was good to know about some important American historical events, implying that overall, the class was not especially helpful.

In the 2015 fall semester, Akari participated in a study abroad program in the U.S. for about three months. Her written notes on her timeline gave quite a positive impression - 「A という場所がすごく良かった。

歴史もみれたし、現地の大学生とも友達になれた。」(Figure 1) - the location was very good, she was able to see the history of the region and befriend local students. However, during our interviews, she also made comments that gave a less positive impression. For example, when I asked Momo and Akari to tell me what their ideal study abroad experience would be, they both joked “not [their study abroad program]” (Interview 2, 2018/01/24).

For example, Momo commented that the Americans they met were less “bright” and cheerful than their depictions in television shows. In response, Akari suggested that this was because of the climactic conditions of the region, and she described the people as 「冷たい」 and 「真面目」, or cold and serious.

Akari had a local student of South Asian heritage assigned to her as a “buddy” but said that she did not become close with him. This, she said, was because he was male and not very extroverted or friendly, making him a less than compatible “buddy” for her. However, Akari admitted that she had a positive experience when his family invited her to join their New Year’s celebrations, where she enjoyed the cuisine and the traditional dancing.

During her study abroad another positive experience was her volunteer work at an aged care facility. There she spent time with various elderly residents, including people suffering from Alzheimer’s disease. She said that even though they could not remember her, they were happy to see her when she came, which made her happy too.

Akari also mentioned that she liked being able to watch American talk shows on TV as they aired instead of waiting to watch them later

online as she had done in Japan.

She also had some negative comments about her experiences, mostly inconveniences she experienced. The person in the room next to her in the dormitories kept her awake late at night with phone calls she could hear through the wall. The insufficient public transport caused her to have to use Uber services fairly frequently to get around.

She recalled being surprised at what toilet facilities were like, saying that they were often dirty, with toilet paper strewn about on the floor. She remarked on the gaps at the top and bottom of the toilet cubicle doors.

Apart from these everyday inconveniences, Akari expressed frustration about local students asking questions about Japan that she could not answer. For example, she was asked about various anime and manga series that she did not know, such as “One Punch Man”, which she first heard of when she went to the U.S. Rather than answering these questions, she said she would have liked the local American students to teach her about anime and manga. She was also even asked to explain why North Korea had kidnapped Japanese people.

I asked Akari who she kept in touch with during study abroad. She had lived away from home since entering university, and occasionally made video calls, but said she did not regularly contact her parents except to ask for money or make other requests. However, her parents both used Facebook and Instagram, so they engaged with her via those online platforms, commenting on her posts and pictures.

When discussing her study abroad experience, Akari did not mention any close or meaningful friendships she made, despite stating on the

timeline that she made many friends among local students. Apparently she also did not experience any significant or memorable challenges to overcome, which are often a feature of study abroad testimonials.

Immediate post-study abroad

Akari's study abroad ended and she returned to Japan for the spring semester of 2016, where she felt constricted and out of place. Although her study abroad could be considered too brief to have had an impact on her, her feelings upon returning to Japan indicate otherwise.

On the timeline she wrote, 「アメリカから帰ってきて、日本の文化とか、社会になじむのが大変だったし、自分の文化なのに不自義 [sic] に思った。」 saying that it was difficult to readjust to Japanese culture and society, which she found strange, despite it being her own home culture. In our interviews Akari described Japanese society as “narrow” (せまい) and “full of rules” (ルールだらけ). Practices and behaviors that were previously natural and obvious (当たり前) to her, were suddenly not obvious anymore.

An example she mentioned was acceptable attire - she recalled that in the U.S. she had grown accustomed to wearing leggings as trousers. When she did this in Japan, she felt that people were staring at her “as if she'd forgotten to put trousers on” (Interview 1, 2017/11/22), which made her uncomfortable.

When I asked Momo and Akari about how their study abroad might have changed or influenced their beliefs and attitudes, Momo replied that she now felt more comfortable approaching and befriending non-Japanese

people. In contrast, Akari said that as she had made American friends before her study abroad she didn't have that same experience. This statement would imply another way in which her study abroad failed to contribute to her intercultural development. She also continued to message her American friends occasionally (たまに) via Facebook.

On the other hand, Akari said that she had become more keenly aware of lifestyles and practices that were more feasible in the U.S. than Japan, such as being vegetarian or vegan, and being eco-friendly. She said she had begun to feel stressed and frustrated by the excessive use of plastic in packaging in Japan, including at the shop where she worked part-time. She wished that she could pursue a "zero-waste lifestyle", something that she had heard of online. She also mentioned how it seemed that in general, the U.S. was an environment that allowed more individuality and freedom of lifestyle, compared to the rigid norms and structures she observed in Japan.

At the same time, being unable to answer American students' questions about Japan had inspired Akari to take up a new interest on her return. She joined the university tea ceremony club with the aim of acquiring intangible but visible cultural heritage that she could "show" and demonstrate for non-Japanese people. She also said that she had been thinking she would like to learn how to wear and put on kimono (着付け).

When I suggested that perhaps Momo and Akari were unhappy about returning to Japan because they thought they might not have a chance to travel abroad like that again, Akari disagreed and said that it was because they were young, which made them feel the impact of their

experiences more strongly (影響が強い). I compared it to the feeling of graduating from high school and they agreed. This exchange again somewhat contradicted the idea that Akari's study abroad had not been especially meaningful to her.

Post-study abroad

Akari wrote on her timeline that in 2016 she interacted with international students at her university in the capacity of "host sister". She also travelled to Vietnam to undertake a Japanese language teaching practicum. These two activities show Akari's interest in and motivation to continue engaging in intercultural activities beyond her study abroad.

The practicum was part of a Japanese language education class she had been taking, but eventually dropped out of as she found it too challenging, saying 「日本語が苦手」 "Japanese isn't my thing" or "I'm not good at Japanese". However, she enjoyed the practicum which lasted for two weeks and took place at a Vietnamese university.

She spent a lot of time with the Vietnamese students, who spoke some English, but very little Japanese. The university was located about an hour from a major city, and Akari described it as having a real local feeling, with few tourists. She gained a good impression of people she met, recalling how she once got out of a taxi at the wrong destination and was helped by a kind passerby. Akari was also able to experience more of rural Vietnam when she visited the home of a Vietnamese friend who had been an exchange student at T university in Japan. After returning to Japan Akari still had contact occasionally with the Vietnamese

students via Instagram, with some of them leaving comments on her posts.

In 2017 Akari began to take part in job-hunting activities, which can be a very stressful process, and wrote that 「就活で厳しい日本のルールで困った。」 - she was “troubled by Japan’s strict rules while job-hunting”.

When I first interviewed Momo and Akari, Akari was working on her graduation thesis. She claimed to have forgotten all her English. I asked her to tell me about her social networks and communication habits and she told me that she occasionally socialised with friends she had made during her study abroad. She had not mentioned these friends as part of her study abroad experience. They were also students at T university, who were studying in other faculties and departments.

Outside university circles, she had a part-time job and got along well with an older Japanese male supervisor. Occasionally the pair went for a drink after work.

At our second interview in January 2018, Akari mentioned that she had already completed her graduation thesis, working on it throughout December 2017.

She still found time for recreation and relaxation, even travelling to Busan, Korea for three nights. There she met up with a friend she had made during her study abroad and said she had a great time. She found the people in Busan to be friendly and kind, more so than in Seoul. She often experienced elderly people approaching her and offering directions and assistance.

She had a job lined up at an IT company in Tokyo, beginning in April. Before then, she was keeping busy studying for necessary qualifi-

cations for the job.

Another life change was that she was dating a Malaysian man who she regularly spent time with and communicated with via LINE. They first met at a Tokyo Pub Crawl event organised via Facebook. Akari had expected to see more Japanese people there but said the event attendees were about 80% non-Japanese, including many who couldn't speak Japanese. Her boyfriend spoke Japanese very well. She had heard about the event from an Italian exchange student at T university.

As we talked, I jokingly suggested to Akari that perhaps she would have an opportunity to visit Malaysia in the future with her boyfriend and she said she had no plans as yet. Akari went on to elaborate that she believed Malaysia, an Islamic country, to be a restrictive country with "lots of rules". This was clearly a factor in her interest in travelling there. She also knew it as a country where English was spoken and used as a language of instruction in schools. She had learned a few words of Malaysian.

Akari was still working at her part-time job, but the business was soon going to close down. The timing suited her, as she would be starting her first full-time job not long after.

She still kept in touch with friends from her school days, and was planning a university graduation trip to Greece with them in March. At the time of the interview they had not decided on a fixed itinerary. Akari expressed concerns about not being able to speak the local language or understand written signage there.

I asked about what media Akari had been watching, as mass media can be a significant source of intercultural exposure. She said that she

had been watching a lot of Japanese programs on television. She had also begun watching the American comedy show “The Big Bang Theory” on Netflix. She commented that the characters were impossible to understand as they spoke very quickly and used lots of scientific terminology that she was unfamiliar with. Akari mentioned that in an episode the characters made fun of Australians. I joked “poor Australians” and asked Akari if she was familiar with any Australian pop culture. I was surprised to hear she knew of celebrities such as model Miranda Kerr and singer Cody Simpson.

Akari’s varied knowledge of non-Japanese pop culture and engagement with English language media was further indication of her intercultural awareness and development beyond her study abroad experience.

At my third interview with Momo and Akari in February 2018, Akari said she was very busy studying for her new job, moving house and also preparing for her trip to Greece. I asked how her study was progressing and she admitted she was procrastinating and claimed that it would be ok even if she couldn’t complete it until after entering the company. Instead, she preferred to enjoy the remainder of her time left before joining the workforce.

Akari said that she had been meeting her boyfriend frequently up until he had left for a trip to Malaysia and Australia. They kept in touch with each other via LINE and Instagram.

I asked Akari about the plans for her overseas trip with her friends, and she confirmed further details, saying that they were going to visit Rome and Greece. She did not have a special interest in Greece or ancient history, but said that she wanted to visit a destination that not

many other people (among her Japanese classmates) were going to. Apparently Paris and Bali were popular destinations, but Akari and her friends wanted somewhere different. She said that she wanted to see the Parthenon, and the islands of Santorini, indicated that she had done some research about the trip.

She had also been influenced by the classic Hollywood movie “Roman Holiday” which was set in Rome. Akari looked forward to doing activities portrayed in the movie, for example, eating gelato, seeing the Colosseum and lining up for the famous Mouth of Truth attraction.

We again discussed the question of communication, and she said that she thought her English language skills would be sufficient for her and her friends' communication needs overseas. Akari would be travelling with two friends, one of whom was an English major and spoke some English. The two had been middle school classmates and travelled to Australia together, staying with the same host family.

Momo expressed how lucky Akari was to have friends who shared her interests in international travel and non-Japanese media. This led to the two students asserting that many of their classmates and acquaintances were culturally insular, having little or no awareness of media, celebrities or events outside Japan. For example, Akari said that it was “sad” (悲しい) that her co-workers at her part-time job had no idea what the Hollywood movie “The Greatest Showman”⁴⁾ was. In contrast, she said, if she mentioned it to an English major student, they would all know the movie and say they wanted to see it (Interview 3, 2018/02/23).

4) “The Greatest Showman” was being screened in Japan at the time. It was a popular musical depiction of the life of P.T. Barnum, starring high profile Hollywood actors such as Hugh Jackman, Zac Efron and Zendaya.

Momo said that some of her friends were dismissive of English language, saying that they wouldn't use it so they didn't need it. Akari empathized with her, adding that she couldn't really talk to or connect with such people (話が合わなくなっちゃうね).

Akari said she was a fan of actress Zendaya, who appeared in "The Greatest Showman", and went on to say that she only watched foreign movies with subtitles, in contrast to her friends, who only wanted to watch foreign movies if they were dubbed in Japanese. Akari found this "so weird". I was reminded of impassioned arguments I had heard among foreign fans of Japanese anime between those who preferred "subbed" and those who preferred dubbed.

Akari also wanted to visit England and said she was a fan of an English youtuber. She showed me photos of volcanic rocks on the coast of Ireland that she wanted to go and see.

The Winter Olympics was being held at this time, and both Momo and Akari were watching the events on TV and Akari was keeping up with updates on Instagram in amongst packing to move house.

I interviewed Momo and Akari a final time in April 2018. She had returned from her trip to Greece and Rome with her friends, and talked about her experiences, including commenting on the use of English language overseas.

She reported that English was surprisingly effective for communication, but understanding what people said was a bit difficult (意外と英語は結構通じた。けど、聞き取れるのが難しかった。) (Interview 4, 2018/04/28). This was due to the strong accent of the local people she spoke with. Akari thought it was amazing to be able to use English overseas.

One of her friends, as mentioned before, was an English major and could speak English, while the other could not speak or understand any. However, this did not cause any problems during the trip.

On the other hand she was surprised that even though Rome was such a popular tourist destination, compared to Greece, few people seemed to speak English. Italian exchange students who she had met in Japan could all speak English, leading Akari to imagine that most people in Italy would speak some English. She also knew that Italian had some similarities to English, and therefore expected more Italian people to use English. Akari was able to visit lots of the places shown in the movie "Roman Holiday" which she was happy about, and found it "moving" (感動).

What Akari found the most interesting in Greece was the mix of European and Middle Eastern cultures and the large number of Turkish people. She enjoyed the local cuisine and said she wanted to visit Greece again. Santorini was relatively quiet, being the off-season, but there were many more Japanese tourists compared to Athens. Momo asked her if anything dangerous had happened, and Akari mentioned that Athens' small side streets and alleyways felt risky, with "Turkish-looking men" congregated in groups and watching passersby (Interview 4, 2018/04/28).

During the interview, Momo told Akari and I about her visit to her friend's house in Shanghai, and Akari expressed a desire to visit Shanghai too in the future. The two discussed the question of bringing souvenirs to gift to Momo's hosts. Momo's friend's parents had told her not to bother, but Akari asserted that as a Japanese person, one would feel

guilty not to do so. Momo also spoke about how she had learned how important food and sharing meals is in Chinese culture, and Akari again spoke up to say that it was important in Korean culture too, but not as important to Japanese.

Despite her criticisms of Japanese culture in prior interviews, Akari mentioned that “as expected” the customer service overseas during her trip was not as good as in Japan. In Athens she recalled that locals often greeted her by saying “Ni hao!” mistaking her for Chinese, whereas in Rome it seemed as though they could distinguish her nationality, calling out “Konnichiwa!” instead.

During the interview Momo and Akari talked a little about their relationships. Momo had begun dating a Chinese man, and the relationship seemed to be progressing well. Akari gave the opinion that Chinese men were good partners. Momo explained some nice gestures her boyfriend had recently made, and Akari commented enthusiastically, both women declaring that Japanese men would never be so thoughtful and kind. However, she admitted that things with her Malaysian boyfriend were not going so well lately and they had not met together for a while. She had been using LINE often to discuss her relationship problem with her friends. In return Akari listened to her friend’s complaints about the sex-based discrimination she faced at her workplace which Akari described as male-dominated and “very Japanese”.

Both Akari and Momo had dates scheduled with their boyfriends for after our interview. Similar to their comments in the previous interview, Momo and Akari talked about how they felt uncomfortable and even annoyed by the reactions they encountered from Japanese people when

they revealed that they were dating a non-Japanese person. Akari said that in her experience Japanese people are curious about what nationality friends you have and were surprised or easily shocked or impressed by her having international friends. People often said “it’s unusual”. Akari described it as “annoying” (うるさい).

Momo stated that when asked if she had a boyfriend she tended to simply reply in the affirmative without elaborating. However, that didn’t always work, Akari said. People might ask “Where was he born?” “Show us a photo?” Her mother would ask “What prefecture is he from? What university did he graduate from?” Akari said such questions were not ill-intentioned, but simply about wanting to know the background of the person. In Akari’s boyfriend’s case she simply replied, “He’s from Tokyo,” and said no more.

Akari reported that she had moved house. She was in the middle of a work retreat held outside Tokyo. It was very busy and involved lots of training and study. About 1/3 of her co-workers were female, and Akari was finding it difficult to make friends so far. She commented that she wanted to interact with people not related to her work.

In terms of career plans, Akari did not want to stay at the same company for more than a couple of years. She said she was not used to staying in one place, and hoped to try living in other major Japanese cities (Osaka, Kyoto, Nagoya), as well as living overseas. An option she had been considering was an organisation called “Japanese Partners” (日本語パートナーズ). A branch of the Japan Foundation, Japanese Partners conducted Japanese language teaching exchange programs at middle and high schools in South East Asian countries. Even people without special

teaching qualifications could apply. However, she was concerned that the program was apparently due to end in 2020, so she was unsure as to whether she could apply in time.

Otherwise, Akari said she would consider any companies in Thailand, Singapore and Malaysia that were recruiting Japanese people, whether in IT or another field. She had not yet made concrete plans, but was keeping various options in mind, as she believed her 20s was a good period to explore and try new things.

Akari was continuing to watch “The Big Bang Theory” on Netflix, downloading episodes to her smartphone and watching them on the train during her commute. She was also watching “Sex and The City” on Amazon Prime and had grown to like New York from its depiction in the series. She also said she empathized and identified with many of the topics about romantic relationships and found the series interesting.

Concluding thoughts

Akari’s story demonstrates the complexity of intercultural development, and the benefit of taking a holistic and longitudinal perspective when evaluating the impact of a study abroad program. By collecting retrospective information about the student’s background pre-study abroad, and investigating other sources of intercultural exposure such as mass media engagement, we can gain insight into how the study abroad program fits into the broader picture of the individual’s intercultural development. This aligns with Kim’s theory of intercultural adaptation (2001), which conceptualises intercultural adaptation as a holistic lifelong

process, by which an individual gradually develops intercultural awareness and competence. When viewed from this perspective we can see that while a study abroad program may not always be deeply transformative, this does not necessarily reduce a student's motivation to go abroad or gain further international experiences.

In Akari's case, her study abroad experience was one part of her long-term journey of intercultural development. Although she initially described her study abroad experience as shallow and superficial, the case story reveals subtle impacts which she did not realise until after returning to Japan. For example, her heightened awareness of environmental issues and the rigidity of social norms and expectations which felt restrictive after being in the U.S. She had previously had knowledge of and exposure to American culture through mass media and interpersonal relationships but could not fully appreciate the differences until after being immersed in the cultural environment. Kim's theory also proposes a range of influential factors that affect the trajectory of intercultural development. For example, compared to her study abroad experience, Akari seemed to experience more growth through less formal experiences where she could exercise choice and autonomy. For example, volunteering as a host sister to international students at T university and choosing a language education class that allowed her to travel to Vietnam and undertake a teaching practicum. Her choice to foster friendships with people whose interest in overseas travel matched her own enabled her to enjoy a trip to Europe where she expanded her awareness of English as a lingua franca and could appreciate cultural differences between Rome and Greece.

Kim's theory proposes communication in a variety of modes as the main driver of intercultural development, and Akari's story bears this out. She made choices in her engagement with mass media that gave her further intercultural exposure. Not only did she enjoy American TV shows for entertainment, but as a source of information about relationships that validated her own thoughts and feelings. She also engaged with English-language media online, and her enjoyment of foreign YouTubers and travel vlogs gave her motivation to travel overseas again in the future. Akari's story also shows some key examples of how impactful interpersonal communication can be to intercultural development. Years before she went on study abroad, she was deeply impacted by individual American and Canadian English teachers who gave her early exposure to North American culture. These interpersonal relationships left a deep impression on her, clearly influencing her towards exploring countries and cultures outside Japan. On the other hand, her interactions with local American students made her conscious of her lack of knowledge of some Japanese popular media and culture. This had the effect of inspiring her to proactively learn more about Japanese traditional culture after her return to Japan by joining cultural groups at her home university.

Despite Akari's study abroad program not being her ideal experience, examining it holistically as one part of a lifelong journey of personal growth allows deeper insight into the process of intercultural development. By taking a longitudinal approach and gathering retrospective information, we can better understand the reasons why a student reflects on a study abroad program positively or negatively. In this way we can better support them and even help them to identify and utilise the

knowledge and tools they have gained from the experience. Her story also demonstrates the many online resources student have to gain intercultural exposure, if they can find relevant content of interest to them, and exercise autonomy.

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