

# Hosting US university students at a Japanese jr. college

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## Abstract:

平成 30 年度 1 月と平成 31 年度 6 月に、本学はアメリカよりサンディエゴ州立大学の学生を迎え研修を実施した。学生達の専攻分野は体育、栄養学、社会福祉、看護であった。研修中、4 学科の学生を 2 組に分け、平成 30 年度 1 月には、それぞれの専攻分野に関連した演習や講義を盛り込み、平成 31 年度 6 月には先方からの要望により同じ研修を行い、研修後、アメリカ人の学生と日本人の学生に対して研修に関するアンケートを行った。本論文の目的は研修の全容を記録し、アンケートの評価結果と理由を分析することである。

Sano Nihon University College hosted a program for San Diego State University students in January 2019 and again in June 2019. There were students majoring in sports, nutrition, social welfare and nursing. The majors were divided into groups for the program. The content of the program for the January 2019 program was organized to meet the interests of these separate groups. Following feedback from San Diego State University however, the June 2019 program had the same content for all majors. After the program, American and Japanese students answered questionnaires. The purpose of this paper is to record the whole outline of these programs and analyze the results of the questionnaires.

## キーワード：

authentic language, content-based, learning ; international exchange, international programs, motivation, task-based learning

## Introduction

In an environment of learning English as a foreign language, such as in Japan, the opportunity to have authentic English communication can be challenging. As Carey and Crittenden, E. (2000) point out, "...we must recognise the important and real gains that students can make if they voluntarily initiate and actively engage in interactive communication in the second language either locally or abroad." (p.6) While the visit was brief, it provided both required as well as

voluntary interaction for the Japanese English students. The Emergentist view of language teaching claims that the rules of language are acquired by social interaction (Abrar-UI-Hassan, 2011). In the quest to have objective quantifiable classes, the curricula presented to students daily, can easily become too academic, or theoretical English. An emphasis on form over function can result in improving scores on standardized tests, but without the ability to use linguistic forms in free oral production (Ellis, et al., 2002). This can

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leave a feeling of disconnect between students and communicative English learning, even as the instructor makes great effort to get the students to engage with the instructor and the other students. Additionally, as class time is limited, ways to have the students use English outside the classroom are always in demand.

Programs such as the study abroad program hosting students from San Diego State University (SDSU), can go a long way in alleviating this disconnect. Having native speaking peers come to visit and interact with the students increased motivation (Culhane, 2003) to learn and prepare prior to their native speaking peers' arrival, as well as providing an invaluable linguistic and cultural interaction culminating in meaningful relationships with new friends overseas. In addition to the benefits that the experience had on the Japanese and native speaker students directly, there were additional benefits to the school faculty and staff, partner institutions (clinic, sake factory, high school, nursing home, etc.) as well as exposure to the community as the visitors ate in restaurants or shopped in local stores.

The purpose of this article is twofold: first, to document and report the program in detail; and second, to explore the results of Japanese and American student feedback to learn what kinds of activities are most appreciated by the program participants from both sides of the ocean. The research questions therefore are:

1. What kind of activities are most interesting to American and Japanese participants?
2. What kind of activities do American and Japanese students consider to be the most valuable experience?

First, an overview and description of each activity to provide background will be provided. Then the student feedback will be described, analyzed, and discussed.

### **Description of program content:**

In preparation of the program, while many parties contributed to bringing it to fruition, the primary organizations involved were CIS Abroad, San Diego State University International Programs, and the International Exchange Committee at Sano Nihon University College. Initially CIS Abroad received an extensive list of the general areas of interest for the SDSU program. From this initial list, the International Exchange Committee deliberated over possible activities and outings to match using school staff and resources as well as partner organizations. After contacting possible partners to check feasibility of visits, a tentative schedule was written up as a proposal to be offered to San Diego State University through CIS Abroad. Once the proposal was accepted by San Diego State University, steps to finalize the schedule and commit individual presenters at specific time slots were made. Later, a representative from San Diego State University came to Sano to see the school, hotel, and proposed visitation sites in person prior to the students' trip.

There were two separate visits in the year 2019: the first in January, and the second in June; these will each be described separately. First, the January visit will be described, followed by a short summary of the June visit to detail the differences between the programs.

### **January Visit: January 11-19, 2019**

The first visit was organized with the San Diego State University (SDSU) students assigned to two roughly equal groups based on their majors. The first group was made up of students studying sports and nutrition as majors, and the second group was of students studying nursing and social services. For the first four days, from January 11th to the morning of January 14th, the SDSU students were in Tokyo doing various cultural and historic tourist activities, so

that they could focus more on academic activities later in Sano. Sano Nihon University College staff met the SDSU advisors and students at the hotel the evening of the fourteenth. While the students split up to eat dinner at their leisure in the local mall, the staff met together to confirm details of the program directly. Some activities were combined as one large group, some were the same in content, but at different times, and others were unique to each group tailored to their specific interests. To better synchronize with the host institution's schedule, the SDSU program also followed a five-period day with 90-minute periods. While some translation services were provided by the CIS Abroad guides that accompanied the students, much of the more technical content required interpretation provided by Sano Nihon University faculty.

**Joint activities:**

The shared activities began with a formal greeting and orientation during the 1st period where the schedule and guidebooks were given and explained to the SDSU students. In addition, welcome videos invited the SDSU students to participate in optional activities led by Japanese students outside of the official program schedule. After the combined orientation, the two groups split with one participating in a simple lesson of Japanese language, while the other group went on a Japanese student-led tour around the school introducing the locations of interest. After thirty minutes, they switched activities. The separate activities differing to each group will be detailed following the explanation of all combined activities.

**Welcome lunch activity:** The objective of this activity was to bring the Japanese student body together with the visiting American students as soon as possible to encourage more interaction throughout the duration of the program. To moti-

vate the students to mix together, cards were provided with helpful English prompts to simple questions and answers and space to write the name of self and partner so that each time a participant met a new partner, they would complete the card with both names. At the end of the activity, all cards were collected for a drawing. For each winning card drawn, both Japanese and American participants received a small gift: thus, the more conversations a participant had, the higher the chance to win. Ten cards were drawn to reward a suitably large number of the participants.

**Origami:** The next combined activity was in the 4th period with a presentation of the Japanese art of origami. The purpose of this activity consisted of two targets: the introduction of Japanese culture to American students and the interactions between Japanese and American students. The first part was the introduction of Japanese culture. As the plan of this activity was to make origami cranes, American students learned the symbolic meanings of cranes as a happy married couple and long life with prosperity. A PowerPoint presentation showed them examples of how cranes are used in Japanese art and culture such as ink paintings or decorations on formal gift envelopes. It was also a good opportunity for Japanese students to exercise authentic communication in English. Then the American students learned some basic origami skills as they folded their own origami cranes. Finally, Japanese and American students made some groups, chose some origami papers with their favored patterns, then tried making cranes. The instructions were shown on the classroom monitor using a live document camera while Japanese students provided personal support to the American students, such as how to hold and fold the papers. American students seemed to prefer making bigger cranes by

starting with bigger origami papers. Some Japanese students showed American students how to make other items they knew. The kabuto helmet was especially popular with the American students and many of them even wore them for the activity group photograph.

**Blowguns:** Another joint activity was the following morning on Wednesday the 16th, with an exhibition and experiential blowgun activity. The objective of this activity was to provide an example of a non-traditional sport in Japan. An official coach of the Japan Sport Wellness Fukiya Association, assisted by her own students, demonstrated and led the SDSU students in the use and care of tools of the sport. Despite the large number of participants filling the gym, everything moved smoothly and efficiently allowing everyone ample opportunity to participate actively.

**Sake brewery:** On Thursday the 17th, during the lunch break, both SDSU groups met on the bus to travel to and eat at a collection of small local restaurants for lunch. They were given the chance to interact independently with the restaurant staff to order and pay for their own meals, using whatever English, Japanese, gestures, and other communicative tools to negotiate meaning on their own. For students with dietary restrictions such as food allergies, Japanese translation was provided to ensure clear communication. Then the combined group walked to the nearby Dai Ichi Shizou sake brewery. The president of the company described the history of the brewery and led a tour around the facility to show the manner of producing traditional Japanese sake.

**Farewell party:** Finally, the last combined activity was the farewell party on Friday night. First, was a demonstration of how to make mochi using the “kine” (wooden mallet) and “usu” (wooden bowl) to pound mochi in the traditional way. Many of the American students also took the

opportunity to use the kine to pound the mochi for themselves. Japanese nutrition students provided the raw materials, and various toppings for the SDSU students to add to their mochi. This allowed incidental interaction between the Japanese and American students as they were forced to negotiate meaning to communicate. Immediately following the mochi party, was the closing ceremony and dinner. All Japanese students, especially English Communication and Tourism Field students, were invited to participate in the dinner. The food was prepared by the cafeteria and arranged in buffet style to allow students to sit together and enjoy casual unmonitored communication freely as they ate. Both American and Japanese students exchanged parting gifts as well as contact information while they regretted the impending separation.

#### **Separate activities of identical content:**

Some activities were done by both groups, but at different times, just as the introductory campus tour and Japanese lesson were alternately given to each group.

**Goalball:** The first of these was an activity to experience Goalball, an Olympic sport for the visually impaired. The SDSU students were first given an explanation of the sport along with some video clips of the Special Olympics competition. The rules and court layout were explained in Japanese with English interpretation to assist as needed, then the students were divided into teams to compete against each other. Even in the actual Special Olympics, players have varying degrees of impairment, so all are required to wear official blindfolds to ensure that all players have the same level of impairment. Wearing these blindfolds, the students experienced a sport without the aid of sight, giving them the chance to learn in small part how those who live with visual impairments might struggle in daily life.

**Making tofu:** The next separately shared activity was a cooking lesson teaching how to make Japanese tofu. As Japanese food in general, and tofu specifically, are well known in the US as healthful foods; the students were very interested to experience it for themselves. The SDSU students were divided into small groups with two or more Japanese nutrition students in each to lead them. After a central explanation from the nutrition instructor about the process to make tofu, the students worked together with their foreign peers to communicate directly and produce both yuba (tofu skin skimmed from a boiling tofu-to-be mixture) as well as full tofu. While waiting for the tofu to finish, the students enjoyed eating the yuba and learned more about other soy-related products in Japan, some of which they also tried for themselves.

**Kamimoto Clinic:** One of the off-campus activities was a visit to Kamimoto Sports Clinic. This clinic was a particularly good fit for both groups of the visitors because it combined an orthopedic surgery clinic with physical therapy and sport rehabilitation and training. The doctor and staff prepared a brief presentation explaining their philosophy towards health and medicine as well as the services they provide their patients. They then began training the SDSU students in some of their methodology. They demonstrated various stretching and training exercises, then had the students practice in pairs acting as trainer and patient in turns.

**Senior simulation:** The objective of this activity was to allow the participants the opportunity to experience some of the frailties of advanced age. Utilizing specialized kits, participant vision, joint movement, and physical stamina were impaired. Then they were assigned simple tasks to perform in order to illustrate how much more challenging basic life activities become for

those with advanced age. For a group of healthy and athletic university aged students, it was truly an eye-opening experience. During the Senior Simulation for the January program, students first took a lecture about how senior people would be limited in moving their bodies as they get older. It was also explained that experiencing the senior simulations helps students who would be social workers or care workers, to take care of senior people with better understanding and to cause fewer injuries. San Diego Students put on the goggles and wore the senior simulation jump suits. They tried various daily activities such as eating meals or walking down stairs. They experienced how much narrower their eyesight became and how limitedly they could move their bodies. This shocked them, hopefully teaching the students to pay more attention and give kinder help to senior people.

**Calligraphy:** The SDSU guests were given the opportunity to have practical experience with Japanese calligraphy with actual brushes and ink. After practicing the same teacher-selected Kanji characters, the American students were given some dictionaries and the chance to experiment on their own with other characters of their own choosing.

**Student-led presentations:** The second year English students were separated into four groups as a class project to prepare and perform presentations to the SDSU students. The objective of this activity was to give the Japanese students the chance to learn teamwork, plan and work together, and to interact with native English-speaking peers. As a team they planned, divided duties, prepared, and presented 20-minute interactive lessons to their visiting SDSU peers. One group gave the school tours on the first day to welcome the SDSU students at the very beginning. The next prepared some colloquial Japanese lessons

to help facilitate comfortable interaction between American and Japanese students. The third group gave a short presentation on the tools and history of Japanese calligraphy and selected a small selection of Kanji characters to teach to the SDSU guests and allowed them to practice individually using “fude” pens. The fourth group taught Japanese tea ceremony with an introduction about the tools and history, followed with a small simple experience using “macha” (green tea) powder to make green tea from cold water, and some simple traditional sweets to accompany the tea.

**Optional student led outings:** The first year English students similarly were divided into groups as a class project, but instead of teaching a lesson, they planned an evening activity with the visiting students. These were optional extra activities for the SDSU students, so part of the project was to make a video with pamphlet to invite and persuade the American students to join them. A small portion of the project evaluation measured how successfully they convinced their overseas guest to come to their activity. The most popular activity was an ambitious trip to view the nighttime illumination at the famous Ashikaga Flower Park: nearly every American student and staff advisor participated, much to the surprise of the Japanese students leading the activity. In fact, an English teacher also attended to support them with the overwhelming logistics involved to ensure that all had a good experience. The other outings were entirely independent with only Japanese and American students interacting on their own. They included outings to kaitenzushi (sushi served by conveyor belts), video arcades and photoboosts, shopping at the local mall, and visits to local attractions.

**Activities for the Sports and Nutrition group:**

**Asian martial arts, Shorinji Kenpo:** Combining elements of both culture and physical training,

Asian martial arts seemed a natural activity to offer visiting athletes and trainers from overseas. After a brief orientation of the background of the discipline, the students were instructed to remove shoes and socks and run laps around the frigid gymnasium. They were warned that if anyone complained about the cold, they would all be subjected to punitive exercises. Thus, they were given a taste of traditional Japanese stoicism as they cheerfully learned basic moves of the martial art.

**Sports training exercises:** This class was held at the gym and students experienced how to train their sense of balance by using Japanese tools. First, they tried “takeuma” Japanese stilts, a type of traditional recreational equipment. They tried to walk on them, and when they became more accustomed to them, they tried to walk up and down a slope, walk zigzagging through cones, and straddle “hashi” log bridges. They also tried to walk in “geta” traditional wooden clogs with only one “tooth”, which were later explained in greater detail during the following Sport Training Theory activity. Some of the students became so enthusiastic about mastering the single tooth geta that they even practiced more after school during their free time.

**Sports training theory:** In this class, the lecturer showed a PowerPoint presentation and introduced Japanese ancient martial art training theory, which had been adopted by the Olympic gold medalist of speed skating. This training theory helps athletes move their bodies more effectively and this leads to enhanced performance at the games. Students were very interested in the potential to improve their body performance by these traditional training methods.

**Kendo demonstration/experiential learning:** This activity focused on allowing the visitors to observe the nationally ranked Kendo team at

Sano Nihon University High School prepare for a championship competition. In addition, the American students were given the chance to inspect the tools personally and even drill some of the Kendo moves. In addition, they had a tour of the sports related locations of the school: gymnasiums, pool, soccer field, baseball stadium, etc. Along the way, they also had the chance to visit a few club meetings such as the taiko performers.

**Sports sociology lecture:** This activity was presented to provide an overview of sports and fitness in Japan. Highlights of various sports and fitness topics were presented in a quiz-like format to allow the Japanese and American students the opportunity to interact and learn together. Topics included the Baseball Hall of Fame in Tokyo, the National Stadium, the Sumo Museum, and other such iconic points of interest. As the planned lecture only spanned half of the period, the American students experienced Japanese dodgeball with Japanese English students, while the Japanese sociology students sat an exam.

**Interactive games with Japanese students:** In order to provide the opportunity for authentic, unscripted interaction, a collection of games was selected for the American students to play with Japanese peers. The objective of this task-based learning activity required the Japanese students to explain how to play a traditional Japanese game such as fukuwarai, daruma otoshi, bozu mekuri, karuta, and less traditional “Oh Sushi” (a Jenga-like game shaped like sushi and requiring chopsticks to move). As a backup in case the Japanese students did not know the rules to a game, simple instructions were available only to the American students who would then need to explain the game to the Japanese students instead. Groups were made with half of the members being American and the other half Japanese students. They had a few minutes to introduce themselves using

the “memory game” where a player would give their own information only after repeating that of the previous players. After this initial warm-up game, the groups would rotate around the room to another game every 10 minutes. Little by little, the members of the group became quite comfortable together, speaking and laughing quite easily by the end.

**Activities for the nursing and social services group:**

**Japanese Healthcare and Insurance:** First, an introduction to the Japanese health care and insurance system was given. The SDSU students listened actively to presentation and translation, then asked many questions to follow-up for details. They mentioned differences between Japanese and US models and were excited about the idea of Japanese approaches. Despite being technical and rather academic, the SDSU students seemed to appreciate the experience very much.

**Writing in braille:** First, students had a lecture about the history of braille, where one can find printed braille on items of daily-life, and also how to read it. Next, they were each provided a braille kit to make dots on the braille paper and practice writing their names in braille. Finally, they made their business cards in braille: they chose their favorite color paper, wrote their names in braille using the braille kit, and decorated them with some colorful stickers around their names. The lecturer also gave them the transparent stickers with their names written on it as a present. Students said they could be more aware of braille around them thanks to this class.

**In-home Bathing Service:** The purpose of this observation was to show American students what kinds of Japanese nursing care there are for senior people needing special assistance. For this class, the company named “Pigeon Manaka” visited the college and showed the participants how

to bathe senior people at their home. There were three staff members that came in a van equipped with a boiler to produce warm water. First, they explained how they must always check the vital signs of a client before the service. Then, they brought in all the bathing equipment into the classroom, constructed the bathtub, connected the motor to provide the warm water. They carried a dummy from the bed into the bathtub and showed all the procedures to bathe senior people. This service demonstrated to the American students how highly taking a bath is evaluated in Japanese society. They mentioned how they found this kind of service very interesting and healing.

**Nursing Home visit:** With such a large proportion of the population in their golden years, Japan is the perfect place to learn about geriatric caregiving. The first nursing home with whom arrangements had been made was not able to host the visit due to seasonal influenza virus. Fortunately, arrangements were made to visit a different, even larger facility instead. The students were able to tour the buildings and grounds, observe meals distributed to residents, observe the bathing facilities, learn about “day-care” services for non-resident clients, and even interact with them in small simple ways.

**Bathing for seated and prone patients experiential:** During this class, the teachers demonstrated two ways of bathing senior people at the nursing care facilities. One was to bathe senior people lying on a stretcher. This stretcher slides over the bathtub and can sink into the water to bathe senior people. Students made some groups and worked together. The other way was bathing senior people while they are sitting in a chair. This chair is attached to a motorized track and can safely carry senior people sitting in this chair into the bathtub to bathe them. Students tried controlling this chair in turns. Through this activity,

the importance of bathing in a bathtub for Japanese people was impressed upon the American participants.

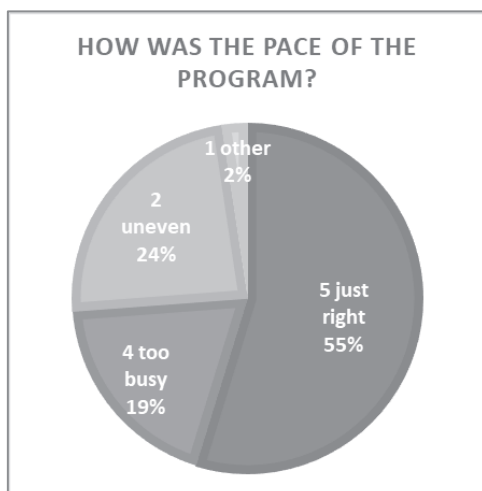
**Sign Language and Songs with Japanese students:** Japanese students of the social welfare field showed San Diego students a few songs using Japanese sign language. They sang the songs both in Japanese and English along with Japanese sign language. Even though San Diego students could not speak much Japanese and Japanese students could not speak much English, they were able to share the meanings of the songs through the sign language. Even though the American students could not sing the Japanese words of the songs, they could still participate using the Japanese sign language they had just learned. This class became one of the most unique opportunities for both the Japanese and American students to communicate.

**Feedback for the January program:**

At the end of the first visit in January, there was only one source of feedback from the students; an exit survey by CIS Abroad who shared the results with the authors. For the second visit, the authors collected feedback directly from the SDSU students after each activity, and from the Sano Nihon University College students after the program ended. The results of each of these surveys will be described and discussed.

**January CIS Abroad Survey:** CIS Abroad shared the results of the SDSU student feedback after the January visit. Much of the content was specific to CIS Abroad only; however there were a few items that were of interest to the authors and the Sano Nihon University College program. The first of these asked students to rate the pace of the program, 55% answered that it was just right. On the other hand, a combined 43% responded that it was too busy, or uneven. Further study into the notes written by the respondents





found that for the Health and Human Services track in particular, had more time between classes/activities than they liked. The final 2% indicated that they felt that there should be more time provided to see sights in Tokyo, a feeling that was shared by many as the next question will show.

The second question asked the participants to list the activities that they most loved, and separately, the activities that they felt could be left out for the future. Since this was an open-response question, many similar versions of answers were combined to discern a pattern. There were forty-two responses to the survey, but not all participants answered this prompt. However, of those that did, there were some very common responses. Twenty-one participants listed Tokyo tourist activities as “Loved it” and separately, six requested “more time in Tokyo” on the side of things to “Leave out next time” rather than listing specific undesired activities. As the question regarding the program pace showed, a large number felt that it was too busy, and the second question shed light on this as a moderate number specifically asked for more free time in the evening. A few other common requests to “leave out” were lecture classes, and “duplicated” programs

where different but similar themes were given (calligraphy and bathing in particular). On the other hand, there were many “Loved it” activities listed to keep for the future: the top activity with 17 requests was the visit to Kamimoto Sports Clinic, the next one was meeting the Japanese students and interacting with them with 15 mentions. The third-place mention was “All exercise activities in Sano,” especially those in the gym with 11 individuals mentioning it specifically. In addition to this was a long list of honorable mentions such as making mochi, making tofu, and the blowgun activity.

The last two questions of interest from the CIS Abroad survey asked the students to rate the program in terms of the educational value, and the overall experience. The average of all forty-two responses for the educational value was 9.1 out of 10, and the overall experience was even higher at 9.5 out of ten. Thanks to the CIS Abroad survey, the strengths and weaknesses of the first program were identified, providing the opportunity to capitalize on the strengths, and to meet the needs of the weaknesses for the second iteration of the program. Considering the student evaluation, the program appeared to meet expectations both in terms of academic value as well as overall fulfillment, and was therefore highly successful.

**Description of June Visit: May 31-June 8, 2019**

The second iteration of the program was modified considering feedback from the SDSU students and staff to focus on the elements that were most popular and closest to the SDSU programs’ interests. First, the program extended their stay in Tokyo by one day to allow for more cultural visits prior to coming to Sano City. As a result, the program at the school was condensed to only three full days instead of four as the first was. Similarly, the length of the daily activities was reduced from five periods to only four allow-

ing the SDSU students more opportunities to pursue their own interests. Another important alteration was that the two groups of SDSU students were combined so that there was no distinction in the content of the activities to be provided. As such, both groups participated in the same activities, only separating as needed due to limitations of time and space depending on the nature of the individual activity.

For the June program, the interactive games activity was offered immediately after the welcoming formalities, allowing the English students early opportunities to connect with the Americans to encourage as much interaction for the remaining days of the program as possible. Two of the second-year student projects alternated with this activity: school campus tour and simple Japanese conversation lesson. Then the whole student body of the school had the chance to interact with the guests during the Welcome Lunch activity. Due to a larger cohort of second year students, a simplified origami lesson was led by students instead of faculty as had been done in the January program.

Occurring in summer, rather than winter required changing the mochi making activity to a summer matsuri activity led by students for events such as ring-toss, bowling, can stacking, quiz games, badminton, target throwing challenges, etc. The buffet style farewell party was similarly replaced with a Japanese-style barbecue dinner allowing the students to cooperate in preparing and cooking the food. The rest of the program was filled with activities that were mostly the same as the January visit with only minor adjustments. These repeated activities were the senior Simulation, writing in Braille, Japanese healthcare and insurance system lecture, Kamimoto Clinic visit, Goalball for the hearing impaired, cooking tofu, sports training exercises, Shorinji Kenpo lesson, and the optional student-

led evening outings minus the visit to Ashikaga Flower Park, as in June it closed too early in the day to allow for visits after class.

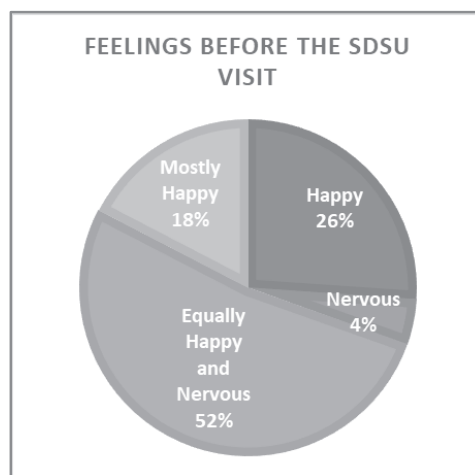
### June Program Survey Feedback

#### June Japanese English field student survey:

After the program ended, a reflective survey was conducted asking the participating Japanese students about the program.

The first question asked about their feelings prior to the arrival of the SDSU students. “1. Before the SDSU visit, how did you feel about interacting with the American students?” Of the students that chose to respond, 52% responded that they felt equal amounts “happy” and “nervous” as they prepared to meet the SDSU students. Then, 26% indicated that they felt “happy” about the impending arrival, and 18% felt mostly happy about the prospect of the visit, but a little nervous as well. The final 4% confided that they just felt nervous without the buffering feeling of excitement. These results suggest that while there was considerable amount of excitement in preparing, some efforts to reduce stress might be beneficial to the program.

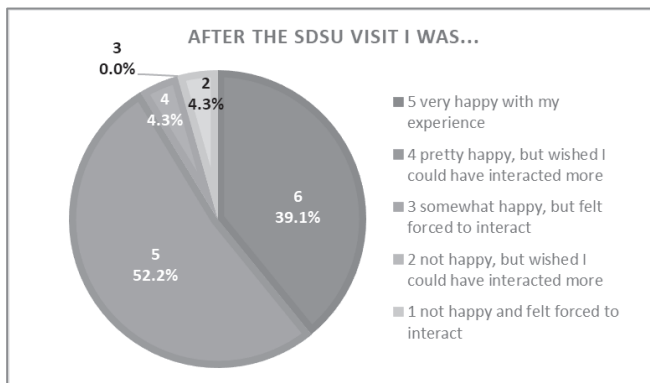
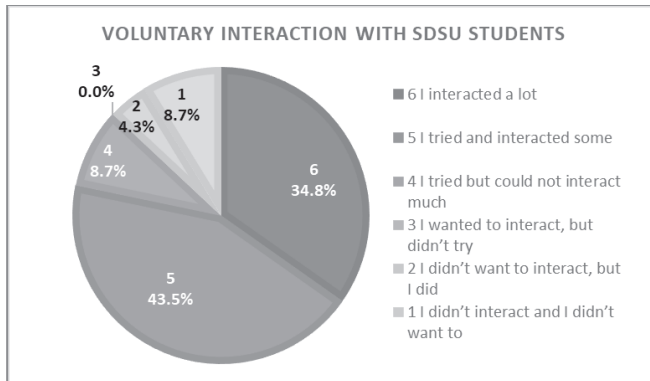
The second question pertained to how well the Japanese students were able to fulfill their own goals in terms of their levels of voluntary interaction with SDSU students. “2. Regarding

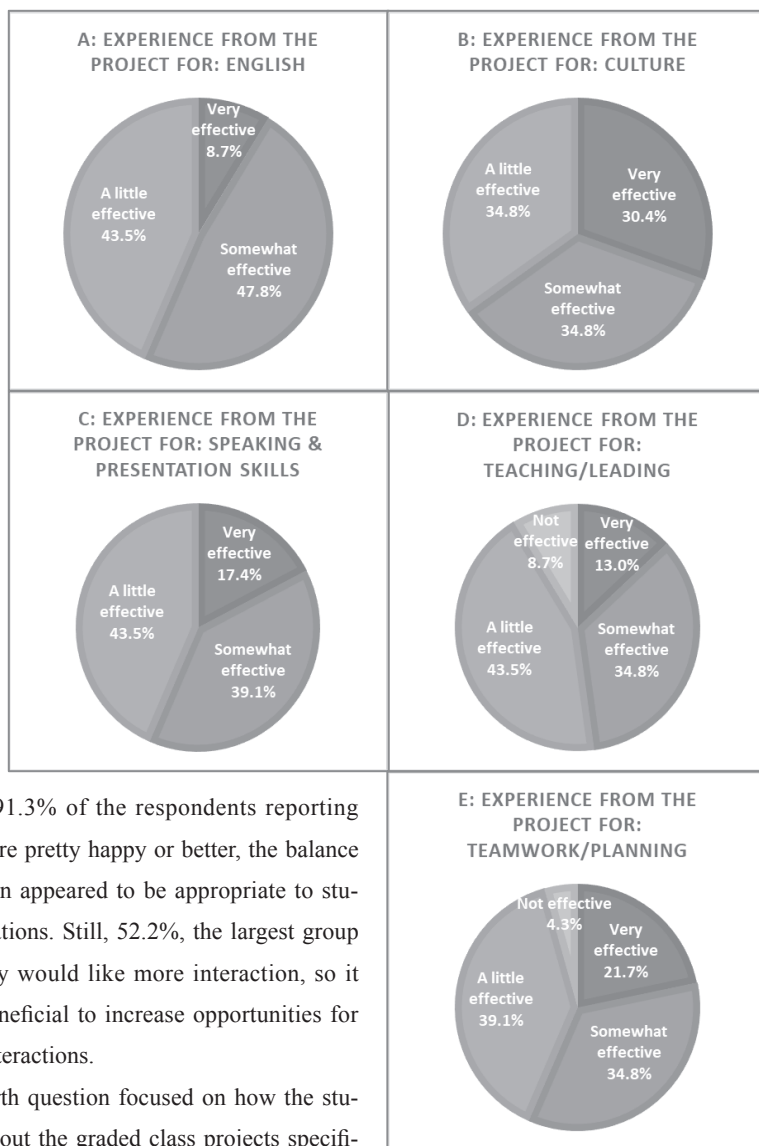


voluntary interaction (NOT project/presentation) with the American students during the SDSU visit...” A large portion of the responses showed complete satisfaction: 34.8% stated that “I interacted a lot”. The largest group reported mixed feelings and results with 43.5% reflecting, “I tried to interact a lot and interacted some of the time that I wanted to.” The next group, 8.7% admitted, “I tried to, but wasn’t able to interact as much as I wanted to.” An equally sized proportion, 8.7%, “...did not interact, and didn’t want to,” and the last, 4.8% “..didn't want to interact, but did anyway.” These results suggest that the students were largely satisfied (77.7%) with their levels of interaction, but might benefit from additional support to give them more confidence to try. The two groups who did not want to interact require additional research to learn about the reasons that they did not wish to interact. If a simple matter of

being shy, more opportunities to speak with strangers, even in Japanese might yield benefits in the future. Also worth asking, is it more important to force interaction than it is to meet with students preferences? Similarly, is it better to allow the student more freedom to learn at their own pace and style, or to subject them to it for the students’ “own good”?

Question three asked the participants to rate the overall experience in terms of their opportunities to interact. The largest group, 52.2% reported, “I was pretty happy with the experience, but wished I could have interacted more.” The second group, 39.1% reported, “I was very happy with the experience.” The third group of 4.3% confided, “I was somewhat happy with the experience, but felt too forced to interact.” The final group, 4.3%, indicated, “I was not happy with the experience and felt that I was too forced to inter-





act.” With 91.3% of the respondents reporting that they were pretty happy or better, the balance of interaction appeared to be appropriate to student expectations. Still, 52.2%, the largest group felt that they would like more interaction, so it might be beneficial to increase opportunities for voluntary interactions.

The fourth question focused on how the students felt about the graded class projects specifically. These were the “student-led presentations” and the “optional student-led outings”. The fourth question asked about five different topics, “How effectively did the **class project(s)** related to the SDSU visit give you valuable experience in: A. **English** Language, B. Foreign Culture, C. Public Speaking & Presentation Skills, D. Teaching and Leading a group, E. Teamwork and Planning”. First, “A” the English experience: 8.7% reported that it was “very effective”, 47% that it was “somewhat effective”, 43% that it was “a little effective”. Secondly, “B” experience with **foreign**

**culture**: 30.4% reported that the project was “very effective”, 34.8% that it was “somewhat effective” and the last 34.8% reporting “a little effective”. Next was “C”, experience in **public speaking/presentation skills**: 17.4% reported “very effective”, 39.1% “somewhat effective”, and 43.5% “a little effective”. Then, “D”, **teaching/leading** a group reported: 13% “very effective”, 34.8% “somewhat effective”, 43.5% reported “a little effective”, with 8.7% felt that it was “not effective”. The last topic of question four, “E”, **teamwork and planning** had 21.7%

report “very effective”, 34.8% “somewhat effective”, 39.1% “a little effective”, and 4.4% felt that it was “not effective”.? Thus, the questionnaire results displayed somewhat mixed results suggesting that either there is room for improving the nature of the projects such that the experience is even more valuable for the students, or possibly that the students might be made more explicitly aware of how the experiences are valuable to them.

The fifth question simply asked, “Which activity did you feel was the most enjoyable?” As it was an open-ended question, there were nearly as many answers as there were participants responding, however once combined, the favorite activities became very clear, and with surprisingly little variation. The first response was 39.1% for various class projects the students were required to do for class credit, the student-led presentations and optional student-led outings. The next response was all actually for the very same thing: the farewell barbeque party with another 39.1% agreeing on it as the favorite. The final activity with favorite status among the responding Japanese students was the interactive games activity to introduce the host and guest student on the first day with 13% of the responses. Surprisingly the students enjoyed the graded projects and presentations more than one might expect. That the farewell barbeque party would top the list is no surprise as they students had made friendships, and had the chance to interact freely while cooking their own meals together in small self-selected groups.

The sixth and final question of interest in this survey asked “Which activity did you feel was the most beneficial to your education? Why/how was it beneficial?” As an open-ended question, the participant responses were varied, but followed very similar patterns, resulting in only

three general responses: the project, speaking in general, and sports. The remaining were miscellaneous responses. While the last two, speaking and sports, were not specific activities of the program, the uniformity of the responses demands attention even though they did not quite match the question. The single largest response 43.5% was that the projects were the most beneficial with the primary reasons being the opportunities to speak in English during the presentation, as well as the actual process of planning the project. The next response, 26.1% just mentioned speaking or talking in general, citing a gained respect for foreign culture as well as English speaking skills. The third and final response was for “sports” in which it is unclear exactly which activity was in question as there were a few sports involving both Japanese and American students (goalball, optional activity: basketball, and summer matsuri: badminton). However, they all cited the fun and how the natural communication required during sports helped their speaking ability increase. With this data in mind, in addition to the required projects for the students, future programs might consider additional opportunities for sports, possibly as optional, voluntary activities or possibly other non-sports activities that also similarly require communication to perform. Thus, as Nunan, D. (2004) states regarding task-based learning” ... learners learn to communicate by communicating. The ends and the means become one and the same.”

### **Data analysis and discussion**

The data collected from the San Diego students was so extensive, that the results of all points exceed the purview of this paper. However, to answer the research questions, a summary of the most relevant data will be explored.

**Research question 1:** “What kind of activities are most interesting to American and Japa-

nese participants?”

First, the top 3 ranked results from the American and Japanese students will be considered separately, then later together. The American students rated each activity in terms of “Interesting”: four activities tied with an average score 5 (“Very”). These activities were the old age simulation, visit to Kamimoto Clinic, goalball, and the farewell barbeque party. The second rank was also a tie with an average of 4.91: the summer matsuri, a student project, and making tofu. Finally, the third rank of responses, two activities tied with a score of 4.85, interactive games with Japanese students, and writing in braille.

The nature of the question posed to the Japanese students was slightly different, simply asking an open-ended question, “Which activity was the most enjoyable?” with the resulting responses collated and tallied to a percentage. The first rank of responses was tied with 39.1% for each: the project and the farewell barbeque party. The second rank of responses with 13%, was the interactive games activity, followed by the remaining 8.7% a collection of miscellaneous responses.

The Japanese students did not participate in all the activities that the American students did, so the most valuable takeaway from this comparison is to note the activities that overlap between the two groups. The Japanese students selected their class projects as the first rank, one of which was in the second rank summer matsuri from the American student surveys. The American students’ top ranked barbeque party was also in the top rank of the Japanese student surveys. The interactive games activity was second tier of the Japanese, and in the third tier of the American students.

Considering these results, it suggests that the American students consider hands-on, experiential activities that are closely related to their

chosen fields as the most interesting. The Japanese students similarly consider the interactive, English immersive activities as the most interesting, likely because they are experiential learning of English, their own chosen field. In addition, both Japanese and American students seemed to highly rank the activities that allowed them the chance to have direct interaction with each other. Considering the central role that experience has in learning (Kolb, et al., 2001), this type of activity is particularly beneficial for learners, and as demonstrated by such feedback, quite enjoyable as well.

**Research Question 2:** “What kind of activities do American and Japanese students consider to be the most valuable experience?”

The four activities previously mentioned in the analysis of question one, also top the list of the activities that the San Diego students considered the most valuable experience. Once again, they were the old age simulation, visit to Kamimoto Clinic, goalball, and the farewell barbeque party all evaluated at an average of a perfect 5. The second rank also mirrored the first question with the summer matsuri activity measured at 4.91. The third rank however differed slightly adding the activity Japanese language (a Japanese student project) to the previously listed interactive games with Japanese students and writing in braille, all evaluated at 4.89.

Similarly, Japanese students also indicated that the same activity that they had evaluated as most interesting (in research question one), the project, was also the most valuable experience for their education with 43.5% selecting it. However, rather than a specific program activity, the second ranked item, 26.1% was a collection of general “speaking” responses. The third tier of responses listed “sports”, gathering 13% of the responses.

Perhaps unsurprisingly, these results reflect

the same kind of results as were described in question one: the activities considered most valuable were also the most interesting, but with minor distinctions. While not considered the most interesting, the American students recognized the Japanese language lesson (a student project) as a very valuable experience. This was one of the Japanese student projects, still in the top tier of valuable experiences for the Japanese students. The Japanese students broke from citing specific activities, and instead simply recognized the importance of interaction in general as of great value. In fact, the questionnaire comments indicated that much of the reasoning for the projects being chosen as favorite also referred to the speaking opportunities. Indeed, the American student responses often had these same types of activities selected, commenting on the rewarding nature of interacting with the Japanese students.

### **Limitations**

The surveys given to the American and Japanese students were prepared at different times, and for differing purposes. The nature of the responses was similar in theme but were measured differently. The American student surveys were all Likert scale responses collecting standardized responses, but the surveys to the Japanese students were open ended allowing a vast array of responses that had to be collated and tallied for measurement. This required researcher judgement that might have affected the results in some manner. In addition, the nature of Japanese student projects differed between the first- and second-year students, so the responses from both American and Japanese students were sometimes combined into aggregate measurements of “project” which might have lost some of the meaning. Finally, while the American students missed a few items occasionally on the survey, each one of them provided feedback. Unfortunately, not all of

the Japanese students were able to provide feedback, and so approximately 30% of the Japanese students were not represented in the data collected, especially considering the small number of total participants involved, the provided feedback might not accurately reflect the collective whole of the Japanese students opinions.

### **Conclusion**

With the lowest survey result from the American student survey at 4.19 out of a maximum of 5, it is clear that the activities provided in the program were very appropriate to the interests and values of the visitors. In terms of their expectations, very little changes to the program are required. As for the Japanese students, there may be a greater opportunity to better help them to grow in some of the practical skills of the projects (speaking ability, presentations skills, teamwork, etc.) Even so, the Japanese student responses, as well as direct observation and reflective journals, indicate that the Japanese participants were not only happy with the experience, but have noticed a change in perspective as well as motivation. Both American and Japanese students alike have written that they have been irrevocably changed for the better through their experiences in the program.

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