A Narrative Analysis of Students' Sojourn-abroad Experiences

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Abstract

This study aims to shed light on aspirations among students of Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) towards a sojourn abroad. In the context of the decreased number of students studying in the United States, the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science, and Technology (MEXT) promotes the Project for Promotion of Global Human Resources Development to encourage university students to internationalize. Meanwhile, more and more students take opportunities of alternative forms of sojourn abroad including international volunteer and internship programs. Such students' in-depth experiences of sojourn abroad have been under-researched although many studies reports on the challenges which those studying abroad encounter. Exploiting a narrative approach, this research explores desires for a sojourn abroad and "communities of practice" (Wenger, 1991) emerging in the stories of three KUIS students enrolled in respective forms of sojourn abroad. The findings suggest 1) students enrolled in internships and volunteer programs may be less negatively impacted by the ideologies related to English Language Learning; 2) a workplace could be an excellent platform for students to gain legitimate participation in a target language community; 3) no matter the form, a sojourn abroad may provide rich opportunities for students to explore their future careers.

Introduction

Recent trends of sojourns abroad

In 2013, university students in Japan are likely to be afforded with diverse

opportunities to reside abroad. In general, given options include not only studying in ESL/ university/ college but also being enrolled in internship programs, joining volunteer programs, or working on working-holiday visa. Although "*ryugaku* [studying abroad]" is a term widely used in public discourses, the meaning could be different in respective ways. To make further discussion clear, this study understands *ryugaku* as being enrolled in overseas educational institutions. According to the MEXT, the number of Japanese international students on *ryugaku* decreased 3.1% to 58,060 in 2012. The number has been gradually decreasing from 2004 from its peak of 82,945. The Japan Times (2011) publicized this issue, warning that the decrease of the number of students studying abroad would damage the future of Japan. They attribute the reason of decline to the fact that students have to start employment searching early. Subsequently, a project called the Promotion of Global Human Resource Development, launched in 2010 by the MEXT. It encourages university students fostering global qualifications to "positively meet the challenges and succeed in the global field" (The MEXT, 2010). Nationwide, globalization draws much attention and is strongly encouraged within the educational system in Japan.

Other forms of sojourns abroad have attracted attention as well. Some research shows that more and more students have chosen alternative forms of residence abroad. For instance, Yamashita (2009) reports positive impact of an international volunteer program on students' willingness to communicate in their target language. On the internet and in magazines, information related to alternative sojourn-abroad opportunities have flourished. Information about oversees volunteer and internship programs are available on the internet by multiple associations. The Council on International Educational Exchange

(CIEE), for example, offers 600 to 700 projects in more than thirty countries every year. Some agencies even guide students through finding internship opportunities and preparing for staying in their destination countries. In addition, working holiday related information is also easy to find from multiple sources, including mass media and on-site workshops. In 2010, over 20 forums of working holiday were held, accommodating more than 2000 customers (Japan Association for Working Holiday Makers, 2013).

Theoretical Framework

Study abroad as an opportunity of finding themselves in a new environment

A number of studies in the applied linguistics have reported its positive impact regarding linguistic gains in studying abroad. A number of studies demonstrated learners' linguistic growth in their respective linguistic skills after studying abroad. On the other hand, researchers also critically point out the different ranges of development in linguistic outcomes depending on individuals (Kinginger and Battner, 2008). These findings reveal that study abroad is unlike a magical treatment, but rather a training camp where learners themselves seek for a way to acquire the target language. Norton (1995) firstly argued that language acquisition is "a site of struggle" (p.14) where learners negotiate their identities to find who they are in their new community. Given that learners respectively strive to overcome such struggles in day to day interactions and power structures within the target communities, the context where learners are involved in strongly influences their linguistic growth. As such, researchers in a "contextualist perspective" (Mackey and Wong, 1996, p. 577) argue that close examinations into

learners' sociocultural environment including contents and contexts of learning are crucially important. In other words, they closely examine the interrelationship between discourse, power and identities. Employing Fourcaulitian sense, discourse was understood as "a set of historically grounded statements that exhibit regularities in presuppositions, thematic choices, values, etc" (Foucault, 1972, p. 579). Therefore, the discourse and power which learners are subject to inevitably shape learners' identities. In a similar light, Kinginger (2004) looked into a learner's narratives of studying abroad. She illustrates mutual relations of social discourses and identity reconstruction of a case of an American woman, Alice, who agonized over turning herself into a French person. This study suggests that excessive longing for the target culture and the language itself in the study-abroad context may negatively impact language acquisition. A few years later, Kinginger (2008) reported on the emergence of "national identity" during language learning abroad of American students in France. In this study, she illustrated American students' challenges to ascribed identities as an American and emergence of national identity at a time of socio-political tension between the U.S. and France. She emphasizes the importance of the context of learning since it may significantly influence learners' "openness" to interaction in the target community. Now shifting a scope to Japanese learners of English, Pillar and Takahashi (2006) argue against the media's twisted image of *ryugaku* and "English-speaking West". In other words, media manipulate and perpetuate images of *ryugaku* and English-speaking countries. By showcasing five Japanese women's struggles in Sydney, Australia, they demonstrated the danger of conceptualizing *ryugaku* or Western countries as objects of desire because they never pursue such desires. Pillar and Takahashi call the desires "*akogare* [aspiration]", which includes "'Western' emancipated lifestyle" and "mastery of

English" (p. 78). These desires are constructed by media discourses, such as fashion magazines. They report that an informant with less desire as such achieved the most competent communicative skill. Similarly, Kobayashi (2007) investigates Japanese working women who quit decent jobs and came to Canada to study English without any concrete future plans. These women vaguely believed that studying abroad might realize their career advancement. She also argues that their desire was strongly affected by ideologies projected by media discourses, such as Western movies, as well as macro sociocultural situation surrounding Japanese women. Her work adds other examples of desires of sojourn abroad not only acquiring the target language but also accomplishing personal meanings.

Being seen in literature, whether or not learners succeed in language acquisition is strongly affected by the context learners being enrolled in. Desires of sojourn abroad and the context where learners are in place may interrelate and influence mutually (Pillar and Takahashi, 2006). It may be because they are subject to ideologies and discourses in respective contexts, which may or may not, allow the learners to make sense of themselves in the target community. If so, the alternative forms of sojourns aboard may have learners be subjected to different sets of discourses, ideologies, and ascribed identities. Thus, this study aims to shed light on learners' English language learning experiences, who were enrolled in multiple forms of sojourns abroad. It is hoped that a discussion over the different impact of each form of sojourns abroad may provide interesting points of discussion to inform learners in deciding which form of sojourns aboard to select.

Communities of practice and agency

In an investigation of learners' experiences of sojourns abroad, I will draw on two

key terms: "communities of practice" and "agency". *Communities of practice* is a theory developed by Lave and Wenger (1991) in a social study and now widely used in the applied linguistics. In a following book, Wenger (1998) describes it as follows:

Communities of practice are an integral part of our daily lives. They are so informal and so pervasive that rarely come into explicit focus, but for the same reasons they are also quite familiar…We also have a fairy good idea of who belongs to our communities of practice and why, even though membership is rarely made explicit on a roster or a checklit of qualifying criteria. (p. 7)

In this light, in order to acquire the target language, learners need to become a competent member of social activities in a new language. It is because "repeated engagement in and experience with these activities with more competent member of the group" (Rogoff, 1994, p.209) may allow learners to access linguistic resources. In order to gain membership in a *community of practice*, learners may face reconstruction of identities. The process may not be easy, nevertheless successful learners are likely to exercise agency in order to approach a *community of practice*. This study understands agency as willingness for language learners to discover a positioning in a *community of practice*. Recognizing that discourses and agency strongly interact with each other, this study aims to unfold the contents and the contexts of the respective cases of sojourn abroad by taking a close look at *communities of practice* which Japanese learners of English approach to and discourses where the learners are situated. It is because *communities of practice* and discourses discursively, but inevitably, shape learners agency and language learning and vice versa. In this respect, this study

interrogates the following research questions:

1) What kinds of discourses of desire are circulating in narratives of students enrolled in respective forms of sojourn abroad?

2) What kinds of *communities of practice* and ascribed identities come into play in their narratives?

Methodological Framework

Narrative analysis

In order to investigate the research questions mentioned above, a collective case study (c.f. Heigham, J and Croker, A. R, 2009) was employed. By looking at these cases, I drew comparisons and contrasts to discover similarities and differences across research subjects' narratives. Narrative inquiry has recently gained "increasing stature in psychology, sociology, sociolinguistics, and anthropology as a legitimate and rich data source for a variety of investigations, including that of narrative construction of selves and realities" (Pavlenko and Lantolf, 2001, p. 159). Narratives illustrate underlying insights and assumptions of narrators which even they do not consciously know. In other words, narratives bring hidden assumptions of narrators to the surface. Pavlenko (2007)'s seminal work, suggests avoiding just focusing on content analysis which examines L2 learners' thoughts, attitudes and feelings about their language learning process. She rather encourages researchers to take equal attention to content, context, and form of narratives. Whereas acknowledging her point, this small scale interpretative study will put the main focus of analysis on the content and context. Since the aim of this study is to unfold the environments and discourses that the learners are situated in at the beginning, content and context analysis would be the

best choice in this case. In addition, while some researchers take narrative data as facts, this study understands narratives as "investigation of their 'versions of reality' (Ochs and Capps, 1996)" (Jackson, 2008, p.68). Similar to the way Jackson approaches narrative stories of the students having studied abroad, my analysis is to identify repetitions and patterns in narratives as well as to extract issues and themes across narratives of each research subject. To best make this interpretation transparent for readers, the next section will provide background information of the research participants to the extent which are known. It is ensured to limit the information not to violate their anonymity. All names are pseudonyms.

The participants

The participants of this study are three female students in their third year at Kanda University of International Studies (KUIS) in 2013. I became acquainted with them through my non-credit bearing self-directed learning course in their freshman year. Ai (pseudonym) and Sakura (pseudonym) were my advisees in the course for two years. Additionally, Yuka (pseudonym) was advised for one semester. They were also classmates in their Freshman English class. Dialogs in spoken and written advising sometimes went beyond issues of their module-related work but expanded to their future visions. Based on the interaction and my observation of their self-directed course work, I can ensure that all of them had been highly motivated to pursue English as well as sojourns aboard. In fact, all of them accomplished their goals in respective forms of residence abroad in a few years since then. Interestingly, they respectively selected different forms of sojourn abroad: studying at an ESL program and then working at an internship; being enrolled in

international volunteer programs for short terms; and studying at a university under KUIS's recommendation. Available options of sojourns abroad for KUIS students are listed in Table.1.

Ninteiryugaku Study abroad (credit transfer available)	Exchange program	Students study at a sister university as an exchange student. As long as they pay tuition to KUIS, they do not have to pay for a sister university.
	Recommendation	Students study at a university which holds an agreement with KUIS. Students pay partial tuition.
	Individual budget	Students study at a university or in an ESL program of their choice.
	Short-term	Students study at a university in connection with KUIS during long-term holidays.
International volunteer project		Students volunteer in places of their choice. Various organizations provide information about volunteer programs.
International internship program		Students work at an internship on a paid or unpaid condition. When it is combined with studying in an ESL program, it should be unpaid.
Working holiday		Students work overseas. Within English-speaking countries, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and UK issue working holiday visa.

Table.1. Available forms of sojourns abroad at KUIS

Ai

In Toronto, Canada, Ai was enrolled in an ESL program for eight months and after finishing the course, engaged in an international internship program for three months. She gained the opportunity of internship by taking an interview on the site. While advising her about English language learning, she told me her passion to reside abroad. At some point in her sophomore year, she came to me to consult about her study abroad plan. She was wondering whether she should study as an exchange student, work on working-holiday visa, or do an internship while studying in an ESL program. During the meeting, she confessed that she had no particular subject to study with interest at a university. After a while, Ai reported me that she decided to study in an ESL program in Toronto and to later search for an internship opportunity. Then, she took a year off from university. After coming back, Ai went back to her regular school life as a senior student. A few times visiting me in person, she told me that she was interested in working for a trading company or a manufacturing company which holds branches overseas. She reported me about her accomplishment on the TOEC obtaining over a score of over 850. She also happily talked about her new interests in South American culture and language.

Yuka

In the U.S. and Turkey, she was enrolled in international volunteer programs. She volunteered in the U.S. during summer break for three weeks in her sophomore year. The volunteered work was designed to serve a local community in a small city in the U.S. One major mission was helping to organize a local festival. Later in her junior year, she again decided to be involved in another volunteer

opportunity in Turkey during summer break. When I asked her why she had selected Turkey as a destination, she explained that she was planning to apply for one in the U.S., yet the deadline had passed. Then, she chose Turkey because she wanted to go somewhere she would not be able to go later in her life and because she had known that Turkish people have a repetition of being nice to Japanese people. Yuka also used to be my module student and had high incentives to learn English. After coming back, she started job-hunting. She was made an offer by one company, yet she continued to search for better positions. Eventually, she was dispatched to Abitibi as a consulate staff under a three-year contract.

Sakura

Sakura studied at a university in Seattle, the U.S., for half a year on *suisen ryugaku* [a study abroad program with partial tuition and credit transfer system available] offered by KUIS. She expressed her longing for the U.S. since her freshman year. She had worked hard to obtain the TOEFL scores to pass the standard requirement to go on an exchange program in which she could have paid less tuition. She explained that she had had a passion to study in the U.S. because she wanted to go back to the place where she spent her childhood until elementary school. Eventually, she was not selected as an year-long exchange student. Then, she instead decided to go with *suisen ryugaku* to Seattle, which allowed her to stay for half a year. After the sojourn, she told me that her target career became clearer. She started job-hunting in the airline industry to become a domestic flight attendant.

Data Analysis

The data analyzed in this paper was collected through audio-recorded, face-to-face meetings with each of the participants. Before sojourns, they were asked to keep diary, however just one student actually agreed to share the diary. Therefore, the main source of data analysis comes from recorded interviews. The semi-structured interviews were conducted for thirty-minutes for each participant. The participants selected the language of use in the interview. Ai and Yuka selected English while Sakura chose to speak in Japanese. Yuka switched into Japanese in her first interview because she was not able to fully explain her thoughts in English. The second interview was undertaken only with Yuka, whose first interview data needed clarification and additional information. The Japanese interview data was translated into English by the researcher. In order to make my interpretation transparent for readers, the original transcription in Japanese and the English translation are presented in the following section. Data analysis will be showcased in two sub-sections of themes which may provide windows to the research questions.

Desires for a sojourn abroad

As discussed earlier, the reported Japanese women's desires were western lifestyle, western men, mastery of English, and a search for pathways to open up their careers. The passions identified in this study were similar in a way depending on the participants. Sakura who studied at a university expressed similar desire for study abroad. She notes:

S: Sakura   R: researcher

R: sakkine gappuga attatte ittandakedo sono gapputte nandattano?
Earlier, you said that you found a gap. What was the gap?

S: nanka ryugakuassenno kaisyano imeijidato kaisyano imeijidato mawarini ittsumo neithibugaite tsuneni eigoga syabereru joukyougaatte tteiunowo souzousite ittanoni mawari ze::nbu ajiajindashi nihonjinbakkadashi nihongode zenzen seikatsudekirushi nihonsyokudatte zenzen taverarerushi "kokowa ittai amerikajanai!" tte omotte ((laughter)) sorede sugoku "doushiyou" tte "oyani okane dashite moratterunoni nannimo kekka dasezuni kaerenai"tte sugoku asettemashita

Well, judging from images coming from agencies of study abroad, images coming from agencies of study abroad, I had expected situations where I would be surrounded by native speakers and speak English all the time, but everyone around me was Asians, there were many Japanese, I can get around in Japanese and eat Japanese food. So I thought "Here is not America!" ((laughter)) Then I thought "what should I do? I can't go home without achieving anything even though my parents supported me". I was very upset.

Similar to the women in Pillar and Takahashi and Kobayashi, Sakura points out misguided images of study abroad by study-abroad agencies. She claims that she expected circumstances where she would easily gain an access to English spoken by native speakers (NSs). In fact, her classmates were mostly Asian, including many Japanese. The miss-imagined context of study abroad that Sakura explains doesn't seem to include any struggle gaining "voice" in the community of the target language. Even more she imagined herself easily becoming able to communicate with native speakers in native-like English. The following excerpt

shows her desired self toward study abroad before the sojourn.

R: *he::: demo imano hanashiwo kiiteruto ikumaekara jibunwa kounaritaitteiu souzouga sugoku attanokanatte omottandakedo sorewa douiumonowo mottetano?*

        Aha, but after listening to what you have just said, I thought that you might have had a clear image that you had wanted to be. What kind of image of yourself did you hold?

S: *ikumae sugoi eigo syaberuno nigatede tsumattyaushi jibunno iitaiki kotomo ienaishitteiunogaatte sorewo dounikashitaitte omottabubunmo attakara hutsuni kaiwa dekiruyouni naritakattatteiu jibunno risouzouga sugoku tsuyoku attandato omoundesukedo dakara hontoni sorega takasugite asetteta.*

        Before going to study abroad, I was poor at speaking in English. I often sustain conversations and I couldn't even say what I wanted to say, so I think I wanted to overcome the weaknesses, I guess it is why I had a strong ideal to be able to talk freely and naturally. So, really, I was upset because the ideal was too high.

R: *takakattanda?*
        It was high?

S: *tabun takakattato omou.*
        I think it was high.

Sakura admits that the imagined self was "*takasugite* [too high]" and somehow unrealistic. She expected study abroad itself to enable her to *hutsuni kaiwa* [talk

freely and naturally]. Thus, the ideologies circulating around *ryugaku* may be similarly reflected upon Sakura.

In contrast, the other two students' projected forms of desire seem different from Sakura. In the following excerpt, Yuka expressed her strong preference for volunteer to study abroad.

Y: Yuka

Y: *zettaini watashiwa jibunga kore uattekara ironnahitoni susumetainatte omotte ryugaku kuyori kore tankikande accommodation fee toka iranaindayo zettai ittahouga iiyotte iuhuuni toriaezu kouhai ikasemashitashi ((laughter)). Demo taihendattatte ittete erabunoni yottewa mainichi campmitainomo ate. Ryugakuni itte nanka maa tashikani gaikokujinno tomodachiwa huerukamo shirenaikedo mainichi asondete manabumonomo nakuttete iuyoriwa chanto ishinoaru ryugakudattara iindesukedo amarini muimini kaettekiteshimau hitoga ooinokanatte. Tanki ryugakutoka itta hitowa machigainaku anma itta imi nainatte kiga shimasu."presentation toka shite sugokatta toka iimasukedo sorewa gakkoude dekirudesyotte omotte. Sonogomo eigowo tuzukete yatteru tokaiuhitoja nakute "tanki ryugaku owattakara iiya"tteiuhitoga ooito omounode. Volunteer dattara maikai maikai atarashi hakkenga dekirunode.*

   I absolutely want to recommend volunteer for many people after experi volunteering by saying, like, "this takes a short time and doesn't' even require accommodation fee. You should go." For now, I had one of my juniors go on a volunteer program." ((laughter)) But, he/ she said it was tough. Depending on which program they choose, they have to camp every day. If they study abroad, they may make foreigner friends, but they have fun every day and learn nothing. Rather than this…Unless going with a concrete goal, I think many

people who study abroad come back with nothing. Especially I feel that those who joined a short time study abroad seemed not to achieve anything. They say "it was great that we did presentations and so on", but I thought they could have done it at KUIS. Many of them tend not to continue to learn English later, and many behave like "I don't have to study because my study abroad has finished." On the other hand, in volunteer programs, you can find new things every time

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In contrast to Sakura's strong desire toward being surrounded by NSs and a mastery of "perfect" English, such desire does not emerge in this excerpt. Yuka's expectation toward volunteer seems to discover something new in a foreign country. After this excerpt, she described an encounter with an American "*ojiichan* [grandpa]" talking about his experience coming to Japan during the World War II. She said that she was shocked at his story and that her interests in the U.S. and even Japan became stronger. Therefore, her desire may lie in cross-cultural learning opportunities which enable her to discover what she had not known. As she describes later in the excerpt, she might also expect to gain motivation to learn English back in Japan. Later in the interview, she stated that she was aware the short-term volunteer program would not push her up to a mastery of English. Next, I will showcase Ai's excerpt in which she values interactions with her supervisor and colleagues in an internship program. Ai spoke in English throughout the interview. Her utterances in English sometimes include grammatical errors; nevertheless to let readers to interpret what she means in respective ways, I will showcase the raw transcription without error collection.

A: Ai   R: researcher
R: Why did you feel that volun, I mean, internship was the thing that you were

searching   for?

A: *Since started… the second year in university I was wondering to doing a internship   because I haven't, don't have any experience working   at the company, so also I had a dream working as the overseas maybe in the future, maybe doing internship in the other countries might be helpful to doing a internship in Japan. Better than doing it in Japan, so…*

R: *Why didn't you choose studying abroad instead?*

A: *Oh:: because at that time, I was I didn't have any specific subject or course that I want to   learn or I want to research the as a university like in America or in England or in some other country? So if I don't have any idea I want to learn, why do I have to go abroad for studying so maybe just going to abroad, have fun, talk to other country people with more helpful for me. That's the reason. It is not only thing going abroad for studying.*

R: *So for you?*

A: *Just having fun and do some volunteer work and internship. Meet other people, talk to other people, the experience was helpful. Because people I met there was much younger than me and also older than me. They had many variety opinions.*

Similar to Yuka, akogare discourse doesn't seem to reflect upon her decision of sojourn abroad. At the same time, the excerpt does not include any of Sakura's objects of desire: NSs and a mastery of English and so forth. The desire emerged in the excerpt is "experience" to interact with people from other countries and backgrounds. Although she states that she wanted to "have fun", it is hinted that

her decision to do an international internship envisions her future career. Rather than studying any major subject which interests her, she found it more beneficial to experience working at a company as an intern.

To summarize, the three excerpts demonstrate that the students who went abroad in respective forms, had different kinds of aspirations toward a sojourn abroad. Sakura's excerpt is the only one signaled similar akogare discourse presented in Pillar and Takahashi and Kobayashi. An interesting contrast is that Ai and Yuka rarely remarked the term of "NS" whereas Sakura repeatedly did. Ai and Yuka's accounts rather evolved around the notion of cross-linguistic, cross-cultural, or cross-generation encounter and interaction. Another intriguing contrast is that Sakura expected to transform her English speaking ability by study abroad while the others barely mention about the target language acquisition. The degree of expectation for language acquisition and aspiration for NSs as well as their initial interests may somehow connect to their selected forms of sojourn abroad.

Types of communities of practice and ascribed identities

Each of the three research participants' narratives illustrated diverse types of *communities of practice*. Among three, Sakura seemed to have most struggled to approach to an imagined *community of practice*. The following Sakura's excerpt demonstrates her rejection against being recognized as a member of international students from Japan.

S: *saisyowa "party yarukara oideyo" toka ittetandesukedo "nijonjinto karamitakunaikara ikitakunai" tokaittetara yobarenakunatte tomodachiga inakunatta ((laughter))*

At the beginning, they invited me by saying like, "Come and join our party", but after responding like "I don't wanna go because I don't wanna hang out with Japanese", I became not to be invited, and lost friends. ((laughter))

R: sorede daijoubudattano? jibunno kimochitekini.
    Then were you okay? Like the way you felt?

S: a::: maa "tomodachi inai doushiyou"tokaomottakedo "maa syouganai gan-barou" toomotte soko kirikaete
    Well, you know, I thought "what should I do? I have no friends" but I changed my thought to think like "can't help. Do my best."

R: ununun
    Mm-hm

S: narubeku neithibuni ikoutte doryokuwa shitakedo yappari nandakanda nihonjinto   tsurundeta bubunwa attanokanatte omou((laughter))
    Although I tried my best to approach to "native", I think I tended to be with Japanese after all. ((laughter))

R: neithibuno hitowa ukeirete kureta? Jibunga kou apurochi shitatokini
    Did native speakers accept you? When you approached them?

S: saisyowa jugyoutokademo gurupu disukassyonga aggari shitandesukedo "you are such a quiet Japanese girl" tokaiwarete nanka iroiro iwaretakedo senseinimo "dekinai"toka noride ittara "mouchootto ganbarinasai" tokaiwarete mawarini hagemasare nagara neithibuw yasashikattakata kyoukaini noride ikitaitte ittara sonoko morumonno kode sugoku morumonno hito yasashikute tyotto kanyu mitaina bubunmo jakkan

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attandesukedo sonokudaride eigowa joutatsu sitakanatte omotta.

At first, in lectures and staff, there were group discussions. There I was told various things, for instance, "you are such a quiet Japanese girl." When I dared to tell my teacher that I couldn't continue, she told me, "Continue a little more". Being encouraged by peers…Native speakers were nice to me. When I spontaneously said "I want to go to church" to a girl, it turned out that she was Mormon. Mormons were very kind although they might slightly intend to invite me to the religion. Because of that, I thought my English became better.

Being enrolled as an international student in a university, Sakura explained that it was difficult to make native speakers friends of English who attend the same classes. Instead, she was ascribed an identity of "quiet Japanese girl" in group discussions. On the other hand, she was automatically given access to a network of Japanese students. Perhaps because she strived for being with native speakers as she had imagined, she rejected the ascribed identity as Japanese and even the chance to gain belonging to a community of Japanese students. An alternative *community of practice* that she successfully gained an access to native speakers was a community of Mormons. Perhaps, the community allowed her to be away from the identity of "Japanese" but gave an alternative identity of one of the "candidates" of Mormon. Although she approached to the Mormon community by exercising a great deal of agency, she confessed that she eventually tended to be with Japanese friends. This may be because the kind of identity she was ascribed was not the one she agonized over. Her story suggests that gaining a membership in a social community barely happened in her case of short-term study abroad.

Compared with Sakura, Ai's narratives demonstrated other types of *communities of practice.* Since Ai first studied in an ESL environment and later worked as an intern, the networks accessible for her unfolded diversely in the first half and the latter half sojourn. Interestingly, Ai's narrative about studying in the ESL program includes a similar theme to Sakura's, aspiration for English spoken by NSs. The following excerpt hints a community of practice that Ai had an access to the ESL program. The next excerpt followed my response that I also have an experience being in Toronto.

A: *But for me I talk to the many people but most people come from the Latin America. Latin America? Like Brazi,l Colombia, and then most people don't have the don't have perfect English of course. Most of the people didn't have the n::: don't have the perfect English.*

R: *"Perfect English?" [((laughter))*

A: *[Ah:: it's hard to explain. It was hard to meet real Canadian people. Maybe just for me but it was hard to find real Canadian. If you going to the school like   university, of course you get many friends like from Canada, but I go to a language school of course you hang out different countries students and it is hard to find person from Canada to get in my group. Or going to their group in the part of them it's hard.*

Her narrative demonstrates the difficulty of having an access to the social networks of Canadians. The community where she gained easy access was a group of

international students from Latin America, non-native speakers of English (NNSs). In a sense, because it provided her with linguistic resources and opportunities to function in the English-speaking world, the network of international students could be a *community of practice*. However, it should be noted that the linguistic resources shared within the international students are constrained in light of accents and grammar. The way that this excerpt presents the dichotomy between NSs and NNSs demonstrate. For instance, the reference of "perfect English" may discursively position her and her Latino friends as incompetent English speakers who don't speak perfect English.

On the other hand, the following excerpt of her working experience on an internship program reveals that she was afforded with a belonging to a social community of practice.

A: *Would you tell me the most memorable incident during the sojourn?*

Ai: *Maybe working at the dance center was the most memorable event for me. Because at the beginning I was so nervous working there because I don't know nobody of course co-workers. The co-workers were like same age as me or two years older than me, something like that. They speak kinda fast because they thought that I speak very well. And the owner gave me a hard task at first, and making a poster. But the day he said using a Mac, but I had never used a Mac. So I don't know how to use. So I couldn't finish my task on the day and I brought my duty to the, to the, my house and then finish at the poster at, like, in the morning, and I sent it to the owner, but the owner said, emailing me back, "It is not your duty now. You finish the task by the day that I said". So I was like "Okay that is the work". You know for you it is usual because you have to finish your work on time, but for me it was hard first time, to do the official*

work. And then so he explained everything, why not late on time. ((laughter)) And then also he was not, he didn't treat me like as a student he treated me as a part of the coworker so he did, that's the most happiest thing for me. Because even I am not a good speaker, but he was not a good speaker too, but he know what I feel he treated me same. He gave me a same, he gave me equality with the other person too.

In contrast to her struggles to access NSs in the ESL program, narratives about her working at a dance center shows evidence that she gained voice in a L2 context. The community where she had access here was a local workplace. "*Because even I am not a good speaker, but he was not a good speaker too*" may suggest that the understanding that the owner can still fully function in the workplace with imperfect English helped her to feel legitimate in the community. This discursively suggests that the circulating discourse at the workplace was not NSs against NNSs, but rather competent workers against non-competent workers. In fact, in the end, Ai states that "he gave me equality with the other person too". Working as an intern could offer learners with opportunities of being situated as competent members of social communities of practice.

Lastly Yuka's narratives demonstrate a distinct community of practice compared to Sakura and Ai's. The social community which Yuka accessed was volunteer members from around the world. The following excerpt well-illustrate the local context where she was situated.

R: souiu tokitte eigode hanashiteruno?
      Did you communicate in English in that kind of situation?

Y: *zenbu eigodesu.*
     Everything was in English.

R: *zenbu eigonanda?*
     Was everything in English?

Y: *hai. zenbu eigo desu. hokano gengowa syaberenainode.*
     Yes. Everything was in English because we don't know other mutual languages.

R: *soudayone. Zenbu barabarano gengodakara.*
     Right. Because everyone speaks distinct languages.

Y: *soudesune. demo kanjitanowa yoroppakara kiteru hitoga ookattanode spanishwa sanninkurai itandesukedo spanishga anmari eigoga tokuijanai mitaide de tatoeba wakannaindakedo nantokatte itta kotobaga tatoeba huransugoni tyotto nitetarishite "a arene" tteiuhuuni rikaiwa dekirundesukedo mattaku zenzen souiu kyoutsutenga nainode tyotto nanka asian-saidowa*
     Yes, but what I felt was…because there were many participants from Europe, there werethree Spanish or so. They were not very good at English, so for example, when they say a Spanish word instead of an English word, it happened to sound similar to a French word. Then French participants understood like "okay, I got it", but because there is not much similarity to Spanish, the Asian side was a kind of…

R: *((laughter)) asian saido?*
     ((laughter)) The Asian side?

Y: *korianto japanizuwa anmari sokoni kyoukan dekinakattanowa kanashik attanatte omoimashitane.*

I thought it sad that Koreans and Japanese were not able to feel the same way.

R: *esian saidotoka yoroppa saidotoka? ((laughter))*
The Asian side, the European side, and some more? ((laughter))

Y: *iya demo sonnani hontoni hotondo yoropiande ato yoropian igaidato*
kanadato koria japanshika inakattanode
Ah, but not more because most of them were Europeans. The other participants
except for Europeans were Canadians, Koreans, and Japanese.

This excerpt demonstrates the diversity of the members of the volunteer group gave her opportunities of communicating in English. Although she explained that she occasionally felt a boundary to the European side, the narrative above does not include any significant negative evaluation of either side. Yet, compared with Sakura and Ai's narratives showcased above, Yuka's narrative merely projects aspiration to NSs nor "perfect English". Considering that narratives discursively display narrators' inner thoughts, Yuka may have not been subscribed to an identity of an imperfect member nor a NNS in the community. Instead, she seemed to be treated as a legitimate member from Japan in the community due to the fact that she explained that each member was given a chance to deliver a presentation on home country, elsewhere in the interview. Indeed, it is worth noting that linguistic resource which Yuka accessed to was to some extent limited in that most of the volunteer members were NNSs. In fact, she states, *"otagaini nethibuna english supikaja nakattanode kekkou ano tango tangoed tyantoshita eigowo syabette nakattakanatteiunowa kanjitanode uun nanka yappa tyantoshita eigokenni ittahouga souiunowa joutatsu surunokanatte iunowa kanjimashita*. [But, because we are not native speakers of English, actually, well, we spoke word by word, I felt

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that we didn't speak English accurately, well, maybe, I felt that English could be improved in English-speaking countries]." Although having said that, the social network of volunteer groups afforded Yuka chances to voice herself as a competent member of the social activities.

To summarize, the narrative of learners who were enrolled in distinct forms of sojourn abroad projected distinct types of communities of practice. In the meanwhile, in the communities diverse types of identities were discursively identified. In other words, respective forms of sojourns abroad afforded learners different types of communities of practice, which inevitably shaped identities that the learners reconstructed. In addition, it depended on the learners whether they accept ascribed identities or reject them. The narratives analyzed above suggest that

	Sakura	Ai	Yuka
Type of sojourn abroad	study-abroad with KUIS's recommendation	ESL & internship	volunteer
Duration and destination of sojourn	6 months in Seattle	7 months & 3 months in Toronto	3 weeks in Turkey
Emerging aspiration	-a mastery of English -NS friends	-cross-cultural encounter -interaction with peo ple from different background	-cross-cultural learning opportunities -discovery of new thing
Emerging communities of practice	-classmates -people from a religious group	international students from Latin America & coworkers in a workplace	Italians, French, Spanish, Canadians, Koreans, Serbians, Japanese
Ascribed identities	"a quiet Japanese girl"	non "Canadian" & an employee	a representative of Japan

Table.2. The highlight of findings

internships and volunteers may afford learners excellent contexts to gain voice as competent members in a community where English is used in meaningful ways.

Conclusion

This research study explored three university students' narrative stories about distinct forms of sojourn abroad including studying abroad, studying in an ESL, working as an intern, and working on an international volunteer program. The narratives projected different kinds of desires toward sojourns abroad. In addition, it was revealed that respective forms of sojourns abroad situated learners in respective discourses and allowed them access to different kinds of communities of practice. In particular, it can be argued that workplaces can afford learners rich opportunities to gain legitimate positions in community practices of the target language. Further investigation into willingness to communicate of the learners enrolled in the respective types of sojourns abroad may draw interesting findings. Lastly, it is worth noting that all of the three students had discoveries about their future visions through their sojourn experiences. For instance, Sakura decided to search for a job in Japan in service industry after realizing communicating with people is what she enjoys. Yuka discovered that it is better for her to work as "a member of Japan" overseas rather than working for a foreign capital company. As such, sojourns abroad offer excellent chances for students to find their pathways no matter which trajectory they pass in their sojourns. It is hoped that university students take much consideration to decide in which form of sojourn would give them the best learning opportunities. Indeed, educators and administrative staffs associated with students studying abroad may be responsible for raising awareness of students about multiple options of sojourn abroad and their potential impact on sojourn experiences.

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